HOUSING AND THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT, 1860-1914

Caroline Morrell

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Oxford Brookes University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

March 1999

Published papers not copied on instruction from the university

ABSTRACT

This thesis sets out to explore the links between the women's movement and the housing reform movement in Britain in the period 1860 to 1914. Both these movements have been well-documented, but the role which women played in housing has received little attention from historians of housing, and conversely, the issue of housing has largely been overlooked by historians of the women's movement.

Definitions of home and housing are explored, together with the way in which the dominant ideology of the home, and women's role within it, was constructed in the period. The Victorian housing problem, and the housing reform movement which arose in response to this, are outlined in order to set the context within which women activists worked. A statistical analysis is made, on a national scale, of the types of accommodation in which single working women lived and a description given of their living conditions. The extent of women's homelessness, and the provision made for this group, are also discussed.

Three groups of women active in housing are investigated: Octavia Hill and her fellow workers who managed housing schemes for the working-classes, the Girls' Friendly Society which provided a national network of accommodation lodges for single women, and the National Association for Women's Lodging Homes, which campaigned for the provision of municipal lodging houses for women. Among the questions investigated are the extent of the work of the women involved in these areas, the different ways in which they perceived, and responded to, the housing needs of women, and how this may have changed over time. The feminist dimensions of women's work in housing are also explored. The work carried out has shown that women were active in housing on a scale which has not previously been recognised, and that the women involved exemplified many of the traits of the early women's movement.

CONTENTS

Appendices

A copy of a previously published chapter relating to the subject matter of the thesis is included at the end of the thesis in accordance with Research Degree Regulations: Caroline Morrell, Octavia Hill and women's networks in housing, in Anne Digby and John Stewart (eds.), Gender, health and welfare, Routledge, 1996

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I gratefully acknowledge the help of a number of people in the completion of this thesis. Special thanks go to Anne Digby who has supervised the project throughout and given me consistent support and timely advice. I am particularly grateful to Anne for making me draw to a halt. Glen McDougall, who was my Director of Studies until her retirement, gave me a great deal of help in the early stages and instilled much needed rigour into my first drafts. Viv Peto, Biddy Hudson, Joanna Huyg and Maureen Pether helped me with the complexities of computing, graphics and tables, and I am very grateful to them for their expertise and their generosity with their time. Thanks to Viv too for listening to some of my ideas and providing the corrective of common sense. I particularly want to acknowledge the help of Maggie Lloyd who painstakingly read my work and encouraged me in the bleaker moments. I also wish to thank the staff at the Girls' Friendly Society, Oldham Local Studies Library, and Girton College Library for giving me access to their archives and help in locating sources.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION - HOUSING AND THE EARLY WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

Oxford, at the end of the nineteenth century, had three charitable societies which provided accommodation for single women in varying degrees of housing need[1]: the Young Women's Christian Association, the Girls' Friendly Society, and the Oxford Ladies' Association for the Care of Friendless Girls. These three organizations were run by women, members of the middle and upper classes of Oxford, and there was considerable overlap of membership between them. There were also two organizations in the city whose purpose was the reclamation of 'fallen women': the Oxford Female Penitentiary and the Oxford House of Refuge. These were managed by male committees, but run on a day-to-day basis by Anglican sisters and groups of lady visitors. Between them these five hostels or lodges housed some ninety women, they were always full and recorded that they had to turn women away. In 1865 we hear of destitute girls 'begging for admission' to the Penitentiary,[2] and in 1883 it was said that for some of the young women, it was 'the first and only home they have ever known'.[3] A small group of Oxford women was also active in the city in the management of working-class dwellings,[4] along the lines pioneered by Octavia Hill in London.

These activities were not unique to Oxford. Many towns had Ladies' Associations which befriended young working women, the Girls' Friendly Society and the Young Women's Christian Association were large national organizations, penitentiaries and refuges for fallen women existed all over the country and groups of lady rent collectors were at work in other towns. Oxford was no large industrial town, but a small university city with a population of some 50,000 in 1901,[5] yet it illustrates on a local

scale the housing problems of late Victorian Britain and the way in which middle and upper-class women were organizing to meet them.

The aim of this thesis is to explore the connections which existed between the housing reform movement and the women's movement in Britain in the period 1860-1914. The period has been chosen because it broadly corresponds with the emergence during this time of the first women's movement, from the campaign for married women' property rights which began in the 1850s to the militant suffragette campaign of the Edwardian period.[6] Women came together in this period to work for change in many areas - for access to education, the professions and political representation - and for better social conditions. It is also the period in which Octavia Hill began her pioneering work in housing and in which a number of national women's societies were formed which provided accommodation for young single women. Historiographically, few links have been made between the women's movement and the involvement of women activists in the field of housing,[7] and indeed the question of women's housing has received little academic or critical attention in the historical record. There is a gap in our knowledge of this area and the reasons for this neglect are among the questions which this thesis seeks to answer.

It is women's philanthropic activities in housing which will form the main focus of this investigation. This inevitably excludes a number of other areas related to housing. Women were also active in the garden city movement, utopian housing experiments, self-help working-class initiatives, the formation of residential clubs for educated and professional women, and, later in the period, in the housing activities of local authorities. However, the route that this research has taken has been dictated by the nature of the sources initially located and these were largely the writings of women active in the philanthropic sphere. Attention will be centred upon the urban housing

problem, not because housing problems were not experienced in the countryside, but because it was in the towns that the concentration of the worst housing conditions occurred and where most contemporary attention was directed. Much of the discussion of housing conditions, and of the responses to them, will be centred on London, since this is where developments were watched with most interest. However, women's activities in housing will also be looked at more broadly in order to encompass the national scene.

The investigation will be structured around women's initiatives in housing and the way in which women organized themselves to provide that housing. Three main areas of housing work will be explored: firstly, the involvement of Octavia Hill and her fellow workers in the management of working-class housing; secondly, the work of women's societies in the provision of safe lodgings for single working women in cities, with particular attention to the largest of these societies, the Girls Friendly Society; and thirdly, the campaigning activities of the National Association for Women's Lodging Homes, an organization which emerged in the Edwardian period to draw attention to the plight of homeless women. In order to see why women were active in these areas, it is important to outline the housing situation of women at the time and the way in which it reflected wider gender inequalities.

Clearly women were not a uniform or homogeneous group; the housing situation of working-class women was very different from that of middle and upper-class women, and that of single women from married women. However, there were certain aspects of women's position in society which cut across divisions of class and marital status, and which made their housing situation gender specific, and these were largely to do with women's dependent and contingent relationship to men.[8] Josephine Butler, leader of the women's campaign against the Contagious Diseases Acts, characterised the

position of women in mid-Victorian Britain as the 'abject dependence of one entire class of persons on another and stronger class'.[9]

This dependence took many forms, but a major part of it was economic. Poverty forced many women to consider marriage, 'not as a question of happiness, but of subsistence'.[10] Women, of all classes, were generally housed by virtue of their position as wives and mothers, rather than in their own right, and a married woman, as Frances Power Cobbe pointed out, had 'no legal existence, so far as property is concerned, independently of her husband'.[11] Under the common law convention of coverture, women lost the right on marriage to legal existence. They could not own property, keep control of any income that they might have, or enter into contracts, and consequently had no direct control over their housing.[12] Feminists of the nineteenth century fought a long campaign to have these laws reformed, but as late as 1910 Emmeline Pethick Lawrence, one of the leaders of the militant suffrage movement, wrote, 'it is precisely in the home that the rights of the man are by law entirely superior to those of the woman. The husband has the power to select where the home shall be and how it shall be conducted'.[13]

Apart from the wealthy few whose families made marriage settlements, married women of all classes, were affected by these glaring anomalies in the law and single women were also disadvantaged. If their parents died intestate, their claims to landed property were assigned to their male relatives.[14] Unmarried women of the middle and upper classes were generally maintained by their male relatives, but if the financial resources or good will of their families failed, they could be left in precarious housing circumstances. Very often a woman's only resort in such a situation was to become a governess or companion. This would at least ensure a roof over her head, but was

an unenviable position, neither family member nor domestic servant, and subject to the whims of an employer.[15]

The situation of working-class women was, not surprisingly, much worse. Married women of the working classes lived in the housing provided by their husbands and while this might have varied according to their occupations, it was a far cry from the comfort and privacy of middle-class homes. Accounts of contemporary social commentators and investigators are uniform in their portrayal of the filth, overcrowding and squalor which characterised working-class housing and of the ill-health, moral degeneracy and despair which resulted from these conditions.[16] Both men and women suffered in such conditions, but the burden was worse for women as they had least possibility of escape from them and it was they who shouldered domestic responsibilities within the home. Home was also the place where women, of all classes, could be vulnerable to violence and sexual abuse and it was paradoxical that at a time when the ideology of the home, with its notions about women's hallowed domestic role, was at its height, that the reality for many women could be so far removed from it.

The housing situation of single women of the working classes was very different both from their married counterparts and from single women of higher social status. Large families, overcrowding and poverty meant that most working-class girls had to leave the parental home at an early age in order to earn a living. Very many went into one of the living-in trades, domestic service, dress-work or the retail trade, and by definition had no home of their own. Women who worked in other occupations found their own accommodation in lodgings and their low wages ensured that this was generally in the poorest sort of housing. The sheer poverty of single working-class women, whether unmarried, widowed or deserted wives, made them very vulnerable to homelessness,

and records show that very many were forced to resort to the workhouse.[17] Thousands of women also lived in common lodging houses, shelters, brothels, or literally on the streets.[18]

Given these grim realities, it seemed likely that women activists would have perceived housing as a burning issue of female inequality and I was interested to see whether there was a 'feminist' campaign based around housing. In order to explore the connections between the housing movement and early feminism, it is however first necessary to offer some definitions of the terms 'feminism' and the women's movement as they are not necessarily synonymous, nor are they uncontested.

'FEMINISM' AND THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

I put the word 'feminism' in inverted commas because there are problems not only of definition but of applicability of the term. Rebecca West, the novelist, memorably commented in 1913: 'I myself have never been able to find out precisely what feminism is: I only know that people call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat'.[19] Nancy Cott points out the word feminism was not used in the nineteenth century, and possibly it is both anachronistic and misleading to attribute such a powerful label to women who would neither have recognised nor owned it themselves.[20] However, it is it is difficult to find a succinct alternative to describe the movement which emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century aimed at bringing about changes in the position of women.

There are a number of definitions of feminism. Carol Dyhouse, for example, writes, 'feminists have seen themselves, and can be regarded as those who have identified a problem in the social relationships existing between men and women, deriving from an imbalance of power operating in favour of the former'.[21] Margot Badran defines

feminism as 'the growing awareness of women's oppression plus an analysis of that oppression and some active opposition to it'.[22] These are 'political' definitions which imply a critique of existing gender relations. However, there was a huge movement of women in late nineteenth century Britain concerned with 'women's' issues, not all of which, according to these criteria, seem to be explicitly feminist

Other writers adopt a wider definition. Olive Banks, for example, defines as feminist 'any groups that have tried to *change* the position of women or the ideas about women',[23] and Philippa Levine uses the term to describe the 'life-styles and activities of women activists pursuing various changes in law, custom and practise in nineteenth century England'.[24] These are broad definitions, but useful ones I think in that they allow the inclusion of women working in many different fields and move the focus away from the big issue of suffrage, something which tends to overshadow the multitude of other causes in which women were active. The aspect of 'life-styles and activities' is also important in considering what might have constituted a feminist approach. The way that women lived their lives, related to other women, and organized together are perhaps as relevant as the aims of their particular organizations or campaigns. The question of networks emerges here and the role they played in the development of the early women's movement is something in which feminist historians have become increasingly interested. Martha Vicinus in her work on single women in the nineteenth century writes of 'a network of women's organizations and institutions [which] supported each single women entering the newly developing professions for women'.[25] Philippa Levine writing about the lives of Victorian feminists in the period 1850-1900 has also identified 'a strong network of activity and support, which promoted deep and sustained friendships among women'.[26] This points to an aspect of feminism as an identification with women, and as Joan Kelly shows many of the

women active in women's causes, 'came to defend and prize the so-called 'female realm' and its values'.[27]

Another question which emerges in relation to the 'process' aspect of feminism is the effect that participation in women's organizations and societies, whether ostensibly feminist in their aims or not, had upon the women involved. Maggie Andrews in her discussion of the Women's Institute, an organization which would not at first sight seem to be in the tradition of militant activism, argues that it provided 'a space for women to shape their own identities' and acted as 'a springboard for women into other feminist and social welfare campaigns'. It was these factors, she says, which 'draws the WI into the arena of feminism'.[28] The experience which women gained through such organizations is reflected in the growing public profile of women through the period. As women's confidence grew, they stepped beyond the bounds of what was previously acceptable feminine behaviour and became capable of addressing public meetings, organizing mass campaigns and serving as members of Royal Commissions. From Mary Carpenter, unable in 1851 to give her own paper at a conference because she felt that 'to have lifted up her voice in an assembly of gentlemen would have been tantamount to unsexing herself',[29] we see the suffragettes of the early twentieth century holding rallies in Trafalgar Square, disrupting Parliament and engaging in a campaign of public law-breaking.

.

This focus on process, as opposed to aims, provides another way of looking at what might constitute feminism. However, it is one which raises important questions about which organizations or individuals it is appropriate to include under the heading of feminism. The Women's National Anti-Suffrage League, for example, displayed characteristics of networking, gender solidarity and social support,[30] but I would be hesitant to describe as feminist an organization which actively campaigned for the with-

holding of rights from women. This is further complicated by the fact that many of the women at the forefront of the anti-suffrage movement, such as Mrs Humphrey Ward, were active in promoting women's causes in other areas such as education, local government and social welfare. This all points to the complexity of the women's movement, and the difficulty of neatly pigeon-holing women within it. There were a host of women's organizations, and individual women, which, while they may have been very active in women's causes, were ambivalent about, or distanced themselves from, the question of women's rights or demands for equality with men. However, they too contributed to change in the position of women over the period.

Possibly there is a useful distinction to be made here between feminism and the women's movement, in that feminism can be contained within the women's movement, but it was not the whole of it. This raises issues to explore about the women involved in housing work - did they campaign for women's *rights* to housing, did they work together in ways that can be characterised as feminist, were they involved in other women's issues - and, importantly, were they a uniform body of which it is possible to make such generalisations?

One generalisation which it is possible to make is that the roles of the women involved in the philanthropic housing movement were divided by class, in that those who were the objects of concern and intervention were of the working classes and those who did the organizing were of the middle and upper classes. This highlights the element of social control which may have been contained within the benevolent activities of middle and upper-class women. It also exposes some of the tensions in the women's movement between class and gender - could a sense of sisterly solidarity overcome social divisions? The great issues of the women's movement - the vote, access to education and employment, equality before the law - were the battles of middle-class

women, liberal feminists who joined together to fight for the right to work outside the home and for a role in the public world. The situation was very different for the overworked women of the working classes, however. Mabel Atkinson of the Fabian Women's Group pointed out that the reforms which working-class women demanded were 'not independence and the right to work, but rather protection against the unending toils of burden that have been laid upon her'.[31] Although not named as such, the division between liberal and socialist feminisms existed, and were recognised, in the early women's movement.

There were other themes running through the early women's movement. Many groups were concerned with social purity and the evils of prostitution, temperance was an important issue, and social welfare or philanthropy was another. Prochaska states that 'what can only be described as an explosion of charities managed exclusively by women took place in the nineteenth century',[32] and it has been estimated that by 1893 there were half a million women working continuously and semi-professionally in philanthropy.[33] Women worked as district visitors, housing managers, Bible visitors, ragged school teachers, in rescue homes, missions, settlements, workhouses, orphanages, ladies' sanitary associations - the list goes on. Ray Strachey argues that it was the exposure of middle-class women to the sufferings of the poor, together with the realization they, as women, were powerless to do anything to affect the causes of poverty, which provided 'the illumination' from which the women's movement sprang.[34] As the welfare activities of national and local government expanded in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, women also gained a foothold in public careers as workhouse and factory inspectors, sanitary officers and education board officials.[35] The opening of local government to women over the same period offered women the opportunity to serve as elected members of school and poor law boards, and local councillors.[36] The mass involvement of women in the fields of philanthropy and social

welfare meant a move from the private to the public sphere which was of crucial importance in the development of the women's movement and did much to raise the profile of women.

The women at the forefront of the philanthropic movement, such as Octavia Hill, Mary Carpenter and Louisa Twining, became acknowledged experts in their fields and nationally prominent figures. While they may have cast their activities in the framework of women's duties rather than women's rights, the very fact of their involvement in public life was in itself a product of the changing status of women. As Julia Parker points out, while some of the most prominent women activists may not have subscribed publicly to calls for greater sexual equality, a claim for greater freedom and independence was implicit in their lives and behaviour.[37]

Many of the groups working with women's housing or welfare needs justified their move into the wider realm of work outside the home by framing it as an extension of their domestic duties. The emphasis on the importance of women's domestic role, and the supreme importance of motherhood, represents an aspect of women's move into the welfare professions which has been described as 'maternalism'. The role which this played in legitimising women's involvement in domestified politics in the community and the local state has been to the fore in recent feminist historiography.[38] This was not confined to women who actually were wives or mothers, nor to those who worked in philanthropy, but was called upon by feminists of all persuasions; Emmeline Pankhurst, for example, said that it was the plight of 'poor and unprotected mothers and their babies' which she saw in the course of her duties as a Poor Law Guardian which convinced her that 'we shall have to have new laws and we can never have them until women have the vote'.[39] In the context of housing, an area of central importance to the domestic role of women, a question emerges over the extent to

which early women housing workers utilised or challenged this maternalistic, domestic ideology in their creation of the profession of housing management for women. It is also interesting that while many of the women involved expressed themselves through the conventional language of mothering and family duty, and made little mention of women's rights, a somewhat different emphasis is apparent in the ways in which some of them lived their lives. There is a question over the extent to which some of these early women activists deliberately adopted a 'strategic', and hence partial, presentation of the aims of their work.

In summary, the struggle for the emancipation of women which gathered force in the nineteenth century took place on a number of fronts and it is probably misleading to think in terms of a single women's movement. The achievements of women pioneers in the fields of education, legislation, employment, social welfare and the campaign for the vote have been well-documented and although clearly inter-related can also be viewed as separate issues. However, the question of housing has not emerged as an issue in the history of the women's movement and conversely, women do not figure in the history of the housing reform movement.

There are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, both men and women suffered in the appalling housing conditions of Victorian and Edwardian Britain, and women activists, such as Octavia Hill, did not focus on the particular housing needs of women, but worked to improve the housing conditions of working-class communities as a whole. Secondly, the great work which women's societies carried out in providing accommodation for single women was often presented under the heading of 'social purity' work rather than being considered as housing provision. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, the way that the process of housing reform has been defined and

written about tends to exclude the role of women, both as members of the poor who lived in wretched housing conditions, and as actors in the process of reform.

Much of the historiography of the housing reform movement[40] has been concerned with charting the process which led from a shift from the laissez-faire, market-driven approach to housing of the early nineteenth century to the increasing intervention of the state into housing provision and the emergence of municipal housing in the early twentieth century. As Peter Kemp[41] points out such an approach often involves a 'Whig' interpretation of history, in that the process in interpreted in terms of the end. If housing reform is viewed as the progression towards state involvement in housing, then in terms of those who were active in the process of housing reform, women do not have a role. Women were unable to act in matters of policy making, legislation or higher administration, and the great names which emerge from housing history, with the exception of Octavia Hill, are overwhelmingly male - the public health reformers Edwin Chadwick and Dr Southwood Smith, the great social reformer, Lord Shaftesbury, the politicians Torrens and Cross.

If, however, the definition of housing reform is expanded to include the efforts of the voluntary sector, and the work carried out to meet the housing needs of single women, then women certainly do have a place. While women could not pass laws to improve housing conditions, nor command funds themselves to build, they could and did, organize to work directly among the poor, and used their influence to persuade the monied classes to invest in improved housing schemes. The housing management work pioneered by Octavia Hill was solely carried out by women, and in their activities as district visitors and members of ladies' sanitary associations, middle-class women had an insight into working-class homes which male reformers lacked.[42] Women such as Mary Higgs of the National Association of Women's Lodging Homes and Maud

Pember Reeves of the Fabian Women's Group investigated the housing conditions of working-class women and wrote extensively on the subject.[43] Women were also active in the Garden City movement and when women gained access to local government in the Edwardian period, women councillors, as Patricia Hollis shows, made housing their particular interest.[44] Apart from Octavia Hill, however, little attention has been paid to the involvement of women in housing reform,

Women are also ignored as the subject of housing reform. As Watson points out, 'housing policy and provision in Britain assumes and is structured around the patriarchal family form'[45] and it is the adult male worker and his dependants who is the object of concern in housing policy, as in other areas of social policy. Henrietta Barnett, who managed working-class housing schemes in the East End from the 1880s onwards, commented in more homely terms, that it was 'the well-to-do artisan who looms unduly large in official eyes, and always as the happy father of from three to five stalwart children'.[46] Other groups such as the 'elderly old maid', childless women, young single women and widows, she said 'are as worthy to be helped to dwell wholesomely', yet their needs were overlooked.[47]

There is little in the secondary literature which focuses specifically on women and housing in an historical context. Sophie Watson and Helen Austerberry's *Housing and homelessness: a feminist perspective* (1986)[48] has proved a key text. It provides an historical overview of women's housing position, and a critique of the British housing system over the last one hundred and fifty years, which shows the way in which housing policy and provision embodies the dominant ideology in society. In the context of Victorian and Edwardian Britain, this model assumed a domestic role for women and positively reinforced women's subordinate position, both within the home and in larger society. David Brandon's *Women without homes* (nd)[49] gives a brief but

useful analysis of women's homelessness from the ninth to the twentieth centuries which deals primarily with vagrancy and the responses to it and discusses some of the reasons why so little interest has been taken in women's homelessness. Marion Brion and Anthea Tinker in *Women in housing: access and influence* (1980)[50] examine the ways in which women today are marginalised in the housing system, both as clients and professionals, which has resonance for the earlier period. Marion Brion takes this further in relation to women working as housing professionals in *Women in the housing service*, (1995)[51] in which she traces the development of women in housing management from 1912 to the present day, and interviews a number of women who trained with Octavia Hill. There are also a number of biographies of Octavia Hill which will be discussed in chapter 4.

The question of women and housing is also considered in histories of social policy and writers such as Jennifer Dale and Peggy Foster (1986),[52] Clare Ungerson (1985),[53] and Elizabeth Wilson (1977)[54]have adopted a feminist perspective in relation to the state's policy towards housing. Dale and Foster argue that the recognition of the home as the seat of gendered oppression was one that did not emerge until the second women's movement of the 1960s and 70s. Early women activists, they contend, utilised, rather than challenged, the ideology of the home as woman's sphere in their move into the welfare professions, and hence the public sphere, but in so doing laid the foundations for their later displacement by men in the management of these professions. The theme of networking has been taken up by feminist historians, as we have seen, but there is little in this respect written about women working in housing, apart from Marion Brion's study which mostly concentrates on women in the twentieth century.

METHODOLOGY

This thesis adopts a feminist methodology. As there are a number of definitions of what constitutes feminism, there is also no clear consensus about what constitutes a feminist methodology. Liz Stanley and Sue Wise argue that 'there is no one set of methods or techniques, nor even a broad category of types of method (qualitative) which should be seen as distinctly feminist. Feminists should use any and every means available for investigating the "condition of women in sexist society"'.[55] Phyllis Stock-Morton writes that 'historians of women have properly adopted no single methodological approach, but have instead developed a multiplicity of perspectives on how it should be practised'.[56] What I have taken as my starting point is the statement of Gerda Lerna that 'the key to understanding women's history is accepting that....it is the history of the majority of humankind and that feminists writing women's history have a dual role: to restore women to history and to restore our history to women'.[57] I have, therefore, put women centre-stage in this study, and attempted to follow the dictum of the sociologist Dorothy Smith - that feminist research should form 'an investigation into the experiences of women themselves to recover, not only a record of women's past, but their own voice, their perceptions of their lives'.[58]

To be more precise, I have used a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods in this research in an attempt to construct a picture of housing conditions in the period 1860-1914 and how these particularly impinged on women, and within this to establish where and how single women lived. Case studies of three particular groups of women active in housing have been constructed - Octavia Hill and her fellow workers, the Girls' Friendly Society and the National Association for Women's Lodging Homes. These aim to identify the women involved, to investigate the way in which they perceived, and responded, to women's housing problems, and how this might have changed over time. Much of the evidence for this has been gathered from the letters,

diaries and personal writings of the women concerned. June Purvis points out that 'finding women's own words in the past is a critical aspect of 'feminist' research',[59] and she makes a distinction between 'descriptive' and 'perspective' analysis. In other words, it is important to consider, not only the accuracy of particular documents, but whether they are representative of the 'perspectives of the social categories to which one is assigning the author(s)'.[60] The perception of the writer of the original source of her particular circumstances, or of external events, is valuable in itself.

The question of networks has emerged as a key factor in understanding the early women's movement; there were close links between women active in many different campaigns, including housing. A mapping of these links should help to develop a clearer understanding of the nature and significance of networking and the role it played in supporting women in their move from private to public life. Liz Stanley in her work on feminist biography[61] focuses on the networks which surrounded particular historical figures. Rather than the traditional biography of the 'great woman' with its spotlight on the individual, she advocates 'a more complex portrayal of them as a friend among friends, a colleague among colleagues'.[62] Philippa Levine in her work on Victorian feminists has adopted a similar approach.[63] Taking a sample of 196 women active in various women-centred campaigns, she has formulated a collective biography, a prosopography of feminism in the period 1850 to 1900 which brings into focus many lesser known women. Tracing of networks can help us to place an individual in context and it can also go some way towards retrieving the lives of many other women, who have been overshadowed by their more celebrated sisters. In terms of this study, there is a focus on Octavia Hill, Mary Townsend and Mary Higgs, the chief movers of the three groups I shall be investigating, but I have also attempted to identify the other women active in these groups and to explore what features they had in common.

Liz Stanley states that 'written accounts of feminist research should locate the feminist researcher firmly within the activities of her research as an essential feature of what is 'feminist' about it'.[64] Many feminist writers emphasise subjectivity as an essential feature of feminist work.[65] That the writing of history is a subjective process is hardly a new insight, nor even a particularly feminist one. E H Carr writing in the early 1960s pointed out that we have long moved on from the 'untenable theory of history as an objective compilation of the facts', to the accepted wisdom that 'when we take up a work of history, our first concern should be not with the facts which it contains but with the historian who wrote it'.[66] Where feminist scholars go further than a reluctant acknowledgement that objectivity is not possible is in their affirmation of the value of subjectivity.[67] This view has played an important part in feminist theories of sociological research. Liz Stanley, for example, states that 'objectivity is a set of intellectual practises for separating people from the knowledge of their own subjectivity',[68] and Dorothy Smith argues that 'objectivity in the social sciences is a form of social organization in and through which those who rule translate the relevance, experience and dialogues going on among them if they are to be effectively part of the relations of ruling'.[69] In other words, a stance of objectivity is part of the apparatus of patriarchy, and feminist scholars should reject such an approach in favour of a recognition that it is a human being and not an infallible authority who produces the text.

However, there are dangers in such an approach. The declaration of a reflexive, self-conscious and overtly subjective approach to research may be doubly deceptive in that it could involve not only a partial statement of the researcher's position, but also perhaps conceal an agenda which is hidden from the researcher herself. David Simpson argues that subjectivity possibly amounts to no more than a 'liberal

authenticity', that is, the statement, 'I felt it, therefore, it is'. He also suggests that such a position constitutes an evasion of politics by avoiding any real analysis of what the researcher's position in a culture or society is.[70] It would certainly be difficult to give a complete account of all the experiences, attitudes and sociological attributes which inform research and writing, even if they were all consciously known - but this does not invalidate the attempt to acknowledge that they play a role. I do not wish to write a personal biography here, but perhaps it is appropriate to make some comment here upon the reasons I have selected this particular subject and what might inform my approach to it.

In brief, I have trained as a social worker, worked with homeless people and been part of all-women groups campaigning for the needs of single homeless women in Oxford, and nationally. I am, therefore, interested to see the roots of social work in the nineteenth century and the activities of earlier women campaigning around the issue of homelessness. Housing as an issue did not figure on the agenda of the second feminist movement when it emerged in the 1960s and 70s[71] and I was curious to see whether it could be identified in the first women's movement. It was initially my intention to make a comparison between women's activities in housing in the two periods, but researching the earlier period has left little time for this.

SOURCES

The main original archival materials drawn upon on are the records of women's housing organizations and the memoirs, biographies, letters and writings of the women involved in these organizations. Official documents referred to include the Report of the Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Class (1885), the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws (1909) and the Population Censuses. The investigations of contemporary social researchers such as Charles Booth[72] and

William Booth[73] have been looked at in terms of their references to women's housing situation. Because there is little secondary material relating directly to the main theme of the thesis - the connections between housing and the women's movement - I have taken the route of placing more detailed discussion of the sources utilised in each individual chapter.

There is a certain imbalance in the sources, in terms of both the materials available for the various groups and in the representations of working-class and middle-class women. For Octavia Hill, for example, there are volumes of personal letters to draw upon, as well as her published writings, and the memoirs of a number of the women with whom she worked. The wealth of information on Octavia Hill has influenced the length of the chapter concerning her work, but this reflects the importance of her contribution to the housing reform movement. There is little material of a personal nature for the Girls' Friendly Society or the National Association of Women's Lodging Homes. Both organizations produced a number of publications concerning their work, and there are privately printed memoirs of Mary Townsend and Mary Higgs, their respective founders, but few of the other women involved have left any accounts of their lives. The voice of working-class women is under-represented in the literature: they lacked the time for writing and although much reported on, their experiences and perceptions of their situation tend to come to us filtered through the pens of middle-class observers.

STRUCTURE

Chapter 2 will explore definitions of home and housing, two key terms used in the study, together with the way in which the dominant ideology of the home, and women's role within it, was constructed in the period, and the various consequences this had for women. Chapter 3 will discuss the Victorian housing problem and the housing

reform movement which arose in response to this in order to set the context within which women activists began their work. Octavia Hill, as the most famous woman housing reformer, will form the subject of chapter 4. She has been much written about, but I hope to offer a new interpretation of both the originality and scale of her work in housing and also of her significance in the early women's movement. The second half of the thesis goes on to look at the housing situation of single working women: chapter 5 will address the question of where they lived; Chapter 6 considers the response of the large scale women's societies which emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century to the needs, as they perceived them, of single working women in the city. The work of the Girls' Friendly Society, as the largest of these organizations, is discussed in detail. Chapter 7 investigates the plight of women who became homeless. Chapter 8 describes the response of concerned women of the Edwardian period to women's homelessness in the shape of the National Association of Women's Lodging Homes. Finally, Chapter 9 presents the overall conclusions of the study, its implications for housing policy today and for future research, and reflects upon the process of the research carried out.

NOTES

1. Information gathered from the annual reports and publications of the Oxford Girls' Friendly Society, the Young Women's Christian Association, Ladies Association for the Care of Friendless Girls, the Female Penitentiary and the Oxford House of Refuge.

2. Annual report of the Oxford Female Penitentiary, 1865

3. Ibid, 1883

4. The Oxford Cottage Improvement Company Ltd established in 1867

5. C V Butler, Social conditions in Oxford, Sidgwick & Jackson, 1912, p.10

6. Women had been active in protest before then, but as Lee Holcombe suggests, it was the appearance of a new committee to work for that reform in 1855 which signalled 'the beginnings of an organized feminist movement'. L Holcombe, Wives and property: reform of the Married Women's Property Law in nineteenth century England, Oxford University Press, 1983, p.58

7. Writers who do address this issue are: Marion Brion, Women in the housing service, Routledge, 1995, M Brion and A Tinker, Women in housing: access and influence, Housing Centre Trust, 1980, E Gauldie, Cruel habitations: a history of working class housing 1780-1918, George Allen & Unwin, 1974, Anne Power, Property before people: the management of twentieth century council housing, Allen & Unwin, 1987, S Watson and Helen Austerberry, Housing and homelessness: a feminist perspective, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986

8. See Marion Brion and Anthea Tinker, (1980) who argue that 'the idea of dependency of women on a male relative has been very influential in determining the ability of women to gain control over their housing'. This indicates not only that women *were* dependent upon their male relatives, but also the idea that it was desirable that they *should* be. (M Brion & A Tinker, Women in housing: access and influence, The Housing Centre Trust, 1980, p.2

9. Josephine Butler, Women's work and culture, Macmillan & Co., 1869, Introduction

10. Maria Grey and Emily Shirreff, 'Thoughts on self-culture', 1872, pp.181-3, in P Hollis, Women in public: the women's movement 1850-1900, George Allen & Unwin, 1979, p.13

11. Frances Power Cobbe, Idiots, women and minors. Is the classification sound? A discussion on the laws concerning the property of married women, reprinted from *Fraser's Magazine*, December 1868, Manchester, 1869, p.6

12. See L Holcombe, op.cit., for a detailed discussion of women's legal position in relation to property, and how this changed over the period.

13. Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, Women's fight for the vote, The Woman's Press, 1910, p.29

14. Ibid, p.29

15. George Gissing's novel, The odd women, (1893) gives a convincing description of the plight of five middle class sisters whose father had died without making provision for them. They eked out their livings, taking unpaid jobs as children's governesses, in shops which provided board and lodging, and eventually in lodgings, living a life of semi-starvation. (G Gissing, The odd women, Anthony Blond Ltd., 1968

16. See, for example, Charles Booth, Life and labour of the people of London, 1902-3, 17 volumes; William Booth, In darkest England and the way out, 1890; George Sims, How the poor live, Pictorial World, 1883

17. See the returns on workhouse population contained in the ten-yearly national census.

18. See the Report of the Departmental Committee on Vagrancy, 1906, cd 2852 ciii 1

19. Rebecca West, *The Clarion*, 14 November 1913, quoted in C Kramarae and P Treichler, A Feminist Dictionary, Pandora, 1989, p.160

20. Nancy Cott, The grounding of modern feminism, 1987, pp.3-4, quoted in Philippa Levine, Feminist lives in Victorian England: private lives and public commitments, Basil Blackwell, 1990, p.2

21. Carol Dyhouse, Feminism and the family in England, 1880-1939, Basil Blackwell, 1989, p.4

22. Margot Badan, 'Dual liberation: feminism and nationalism in Egypt, 1870s to 1925', *Feminist Issues*, 8, No.1 (1988), p.16 quoted in K Offen, R Pierson and J Rendall, (eds.), Writing women's history: international perspectives, Macmillan Academic and Professional Ltd, 1991, p.68

23. Olive Banks, Faces of feminism: a study of feminism as a social movement, Martin & Robertson & Co., 1981, p.3

24. Philippa Levine, Feminist lives in Victorian England: private lives and public commitments, Basil Blackwell, 1990, p.2

25. M Vicinus, Independent women: work and community for single women, 1850-1920, Virago Press Ltd., 1985, p.30

26. Philippa Levine, op.cit., p.10

27. Joan Kelly, 'The doubled vision of feminist theory', in J Newton, M Ryan and J Walkowitz, (eds.), Sex and class in women's history, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983, p.262

28. Maggie Andrews, The acceptable face of feminism. the Women's Institute as a social movement, Lawrence and Wishart, 1997, reviewed by Ann Day in The Lecturer, April 1998, p.19

29. Julia Parker, Women and welfare: ten Victorian women in public social service, Macmillan Press, 1988, p.29

30. See Brian Harrison, Separate spheres: the opposition to women's suffrage in Britain, Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., New York, 1978

31. In a famous Fabian Tract written in 1914 Mabel Atkinson argued that there were two sections of the women's movement, 'the movement of middle class women who are revolting against their exclusion from human activity' and that of working women whose 'evolving social enthusiasm tends to run into the channel of the labour revolt in general than into a specific revolution against the conditions alleged to be due to sex differences'.Mabel Atkinson, The economic foundations of the women's movement: the two sections of the women's movement, Fabian Tract No.175, (June 1914), p.6

32. F K Prochaska, Women and philanthropy in nineteenth century England, Edward Elgar, 1991

33. Julia Parker, op.cit., p.20

34. Ray Strachey, The Cause: a short history of the women's movement in Britain, Virago, 1978, p.44

35. See Helen J Blackburn, A Handbook for women engaged in social and political work, 1895, which lists four women on the Royal Commission on Labour, three women on the Royal Commission on Secondary Education, four on the Royal Commission on Poor Law Schools, and twenty-seven women employed in Government departments

36. See Patricia Hollis, Ladies elect: women in English local government 1865-1914, Oxford University Press, 1987

37. Julia Parker, op.cit., p.116

38. See, for example, Anne Digby, 'Poverty, health and the politics of gender', in A Digby and J Stewart, Gender health and welfare, Routledge, 1996, pp.67-8, Special issue on 'Motherhood, race, and the state in the twentieth century', of Gender and history, 1992, Vol.4, No.3, Martha Vicinus, Independent women: work and community for single women, 1850-1920, Virago Press Ltd., 1985

39. Emmeline Pankhurst, My own story, Eveleigh Nash, 1914, p.128

40. See A Wohl, The eternal slum: housing and social policy in Victorian London, Edward Arnold, 1977, G Stedman Jones, Outcast London: a study in the relationship between classes in Victorian society, Penguin 1971, E Gauldie, Cruel habitations: a history of working class housing, 1780-1918, George Allen and Unwin, 1974

41. P Kemp, 'From solution to problem? Council housing and the development of national housing policy', in S Lowe and D Hughes, (eds.), A new century of social housing, Leicester University Press, 1991

42. Julia Wedgewood wrote 'women know the homes of the poor in a manner and degree which men do not know them', *Female suffrage, considered chiefly with regard to its indirect results*, in Josephine Butler, op.cit., p.277

43. See Mary Higgs and Edward Hayward, Where shall she live? The homelessness of the woman worker, P S King & Sons, 1910. Maud Pember Reeves, Round about a pound a week, Virago, 1988

44. See Patricia Hollis, op.cit., pp.445-454

45. S Watson, 'Women and housing or feminist housing analysis?' in Housing Studies, January, 1986, p.1

46. Mrs S A Barnett, Homes not habitations, Spottiswood, Ballantyne & Co., Ltd., n.d., p.8

47. Ibid

48. Sophie Watson and Helen Austerberry, Housing and homelessness: a feminist perspective, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986

49. David Brandon, Women without homes, Christian Action Publications, no date

50. Marion Brion and Anthea Tinker, Women in housing: access and influence, Housing Centre Trust, 1980

51. Marion Brion, Women in the housing service, Routledge, 1995

52. Jennifer Dale and Peggy Foster, Feminists and state welfare, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986

53. Clare Ungerson, (ed.), Women and social policy: a reader, Macmillan education, 1985

54. Elizabeth Wilson, Women and the welfare state, Tavistock Publications, 1977

55. Liz Stanley, (ed.), Feminist Praxis: research, theory and epistemology in feminist sociology, Routledge, 1990, p.12

56. P Stock-Morton, Finding our own ways: different paths to history in the United States, in K.Offen et al, (eds)., op.cit. p.59

57. G Lerner, The majority finds its past: placing women in history, Oxford University Press, quoted in M Humm, The dictionary of feminist theory, Prentice Hall & Harvester Wheatsheaf Press, 1995, p.147

58. D Smith, Sociological theory: methods of writing patriarchy' in R A Wallace, (ed.), Feminist sociological theory, Sage Publications, 1989, p.35

59. June Purvis, 'Doing feminist women's history: researching the lives of women in the suffragette movement in Edwardian England', in Mary Maynard and June Purvis, Researching women's lives from a feminist perspective, Taylor & Francis Ltd., 1995, p.167

60. Ibid, p.180

61. Liz Stanley, Feminism and friendship: two essays on Olive Schreiner, Studies in sexual politics, No.8, University of Manchester, 1985

62. Ibid, p.3

63. Philippa Levine, opus cited

64. Liz Stanley, Feminist praxis: research, theory and epistemology in feminist sociology, Routledge, 1990, p.12

65. See essays contained in J Newton et.al., (eds.), opus cited.

66. E H Carr, What is history? Penguin Books, 1990, p.27

67. K Offen et al, (eds.), write that 'late twentieth century historians have come to place a singular emphasis upon subjectivity', (op cit., p.xxxi)

68. L Stanley, 1990, p.11

69. D Smith, op cit, p.35

70. See S Heller's article 'Experience and expertise meet in a new kind of scholarship' in The Chronicle of Higher Education, May 6, 1992, p.9

71. The second wave of the British feminist movement is generally held to have been launched with the holding of the first women's conference in this country at Ruskin College in 1970. Four demands were made at the conference, for equal pay, equal opportunities and education, twenty-four hour nurseries, and free contraception and abortion on demand. Later, three further points were added: legal and financial independence, an end to discrimination against lesbians, freedom from violence and sexual harassment. (See Micheline Wandor, Once a feminist: stories of generation, Virago, 1990, introduction)

72. Charles Booth, Life and labour of the people of London, 3rd edition, Macmillan, 1902-3, 17 volumes

73. William Booth, In darkest England and the way out, Charles Knight & Co.Ltd., 1970, first published 1890

Chapter 2

HOUSING AND HOME - IDEOLOGY AND MEANING

> *And wherever a true wife comes, this home is always around her. The stars only may be over her head; the glow-worm in the night-cold grass may be the only fire at her foot; but home is yet wherever she is.....*
> (John Ruskin, Of Queens' Gardens, 1864[1])

> *The housewife of the working class is little better than a slave - she has to do all the work done by two people at least in the station of life a little above her own. She is cook, charwoman, nurse and seamstress, all in one; she has not even time to properly recover from child-bearing.....*
> (Manchester Diocesan Conference on Housing, 1902[2])

These two contrasting statements express very starkly the difference between the romanticised vision of the home of Victorian and Edwardian England, and the reality of it as experienced by many working-class women. The first, by John Ruskin, was addressed to young middle-class women in an almost mystical evocation of what their future role would be; the second, by an anonymous commentator, gives a distinctly unsentimalised view of the role of the wife in the working-class home. They illustrate the gap between the ideology of the home and the reality of it which is one of the themes of this thesis.

This chapter will discuss the construction of the dominant ideology of the home and the impact it had in determining men and women's roles in the home. The differences between home and housing will be discussed, together with the various meanings contained within the concept of home. Home and housing, while, being important to everyone have a central place in the lives of women, and the reasons for this will be explored. The terms family and household will also be defined as they are often conflated with home and house, and the way in which they are defined acts to determine which groups are deemed appropriate units for housing. The different

interpretations which have been made of the effect upon women of the gendered ideology of the home will be considered, and the ways in which it can be seen as oppressive or liberating for women. It is also important to differentiate the ideology of the home from the meaning of the home because, while large sections of the population were unable, or unwilling, to conform to what was essentially a middle-class construct, this does not mean that the place in which they lived did not have value or meaning to them. The ideology of the home marginalised the experience of both poor working-class families and single women, and I will discuss the experiences of home for these groups and the way in which the 'official ideology' acted as a form of social control over them.

HOME AND HOUSING

Home is a small word and yet a very large concept. Each home, family and household is different and while they may share many common factors, our individual experience of them is different and to each of us home is a unique and personal place. This is further complicated by the fact that the meaning which home has for us may transcend our actual experience of it. The nature of that experience is also fractured by factors such as gender, class, marital status, age and family position and any generalisations about the 'home' and housing must be mindful of this.

As well as having personal meaning, home has a broader social significance and has been widely discussed by sociologists and social historians as well as housing commentators.[3] Watson and Austerberry point that home, while it may be synonymous with dwelling, a physical structure, also implies social relations and activities, and as such is a social concept.[4] The sociologist Peter Saunders says that 'the home is one of the core institutions of modern British society, the place where we are reared when young and try to remain in when old.....the place where we spend most of our days,

start from and return to, the fixed point in our lives'.[5] Marxian theorists see the home as the site of social reproduction, in that it is the place where workers are fed, clothed and prepared for work, where they are literally reproduced through childbirth and rearing, and where children are socialised into taking their place in society.[6] The enormous social significance of home makes it a potent political symbol; Mrs Fawcett, the leader of the constitutional women's suffrage movement, said, 'depend upon it, the most important institution in the country is the home'.[7]

Home can assume other meanings which transcend the individual home, and refer to a locality, country or in general the place where one belongs, as expressed in phrases such as home-land and home-sickness. The First World War song *Keep the home fires burning* evoked both the personal and the national meanings of home and the sentimentality with which it is often regarded. It also evoked the symbolic notion of home as the place which men go out of and in which women remain. The idea of men leaving home - to fight, to travel, to trade - is one that has been established, and celebrated, in western culture from the time of Homer onwards. Home-coming is associated with men returning from their adventures and it entails the concept of women remaining at home to be returned to. There is no place in the popular imagination for women embarking on crusades, voyages or wars, and the image of Penelope as the faithful waiting wife is one which encapsulates the place of women as the backdrop to men's more adventurous lives.[8] The concept of home is many-layered and it differs significantly from the more mundane matter of housing.

Neither home or housing are ahistorical terms, but while it would be unthinking to project current values and assumptions back into the past, I do not believe that the way in which they are popularly understood today differs greatly from the last century. Whereas in earlier times the notion of the family with its private home might have

seemed strange to the majority of the population, it was one which was well established by Victorian times. Experiences of home and housing may have changed considerably over the last two hundred years as standards of living have risen, but the central place which they have in our lives transcends other historical changes. This is partly because housing fulfils an essential physical need and partly because the ideology of the home constructed in the last two hundred years is a remarkably powerful one - and one which has shaped current attitudes and expectations.

How then does the concept of home differ from that of housing? The expression 'a house is not a home' implies very directly that to most of us these terms are understood and experienced in very different ways. A house, or any other form of dwelling, is a physical structure, a matter of bricks and mortar, but it is not necessarily 'where the heart is'. It can take many different forms, and one can be housed in any form of living accommodation - a house, flat, room, mansion or a hovel. It takes something extra to make these physical surroundings a home, however, as the expression 'home-maker' indicates and, significantly, while one can be housed, one cannot be 'homed'. Paradoxically, the word home can be applied to the most basic accommodation,[9] and people living in the most luxurious surroundings can say that they do not feel 'at home' there.

Home appears to be as much a state of mind as a physical location, and while home and housing can be synonymous they are not necessarily so. Home is subjective in a way that housing cannot be, but while we might each have our own particular image of home, there is a shared vision of an idealised home in our society which we could all recognise. This was expressed very evocatively in the 1833 poem *Home*:

A world of care without
A world of strife shut out,
A world of love shut in.[10]

This cosy image of the happy home is one which has been constructed and romanticised over the last two hundred years, but it is capable of touching a chord in most of us, whether or not it bears any resemblance to the surroundings and circumstances in which we actually live. It is also one which can be cruelly at variance with people's actual experience of home. Mottoes such as 'God bless this house', and 'home sweet home' appeared on the walls of many Victorian and Edwardian homes, yet, as one young woman said, 'I could never understand why they were there, our house or home was far from happy'.[11]

It is apparent that it is feelings of security and belonging which are associated with home, and that to most of us, home is fundamental to our physical, emotional and psychological well-being. The more matter of fact issue of housing is not celebrated in popular song or culture, possibly because the sort of housing in which most people lived in the last century, was not worthy of celebrating or 'writing home about'. A moment's reflection however, will tell us that the type of housing in which people live is fundamental to the sort of 'home' they can make in it.[12] The physical shape of housing dictates what sort of home life can be led there. Spacious, comfortable and well-appointed houses lend themselves to leisure, privacy, the cultivation of home-interests and the practice of hospitality, whereas cramped and overcrowded housing provides none of these amenities and forces the inhabitants out to meet these needs elsewhere, if at all.

Housing, while being a tangible and objective reality, is also liable to subjective definitions and value judgements. This is particularly true of standards of housing and what is considered adequate provision for particular groups of people at different points

in time. Most of the housing in which working-class families lived in the last century would be condemned today as unfit for human occupation on grounds of overcrowding, damp and poor sanitation, whereas middle-class families lived in comfortable and well-appointed houses. Living in employers' households, in work-place dormitories or in cramped lodgings was considered adequate housing for single working-class women and yet it would have been unthinkable for their equivalents of the middle classes. Both groups were housed, but ideas of what constituted appropriate housing for them differed greatly.

HOME, FAMILY AND HOUSEHOLD

Home occupies a very special place in the popular imagination and is something which is differentiated, if not consciously, from housing. The ideology of the home is very closely associated with familial ideology and it is difficult to treat them separately. Home provides the framework in which the functions of the family are carried out, where family roles are performed and to which attaches many of the values associated with the family, and consequently they have become virtually synonymous.[13] The sacred place which the family held in middle-class Victorian eyes is expressed by Octavia Hill's description of the working-class home:

> For after all the "home", the "life" does not depend on the number of appliances, or even in any deep sense on the sanitary arrangements.....there is more decency in many a tiny little cottage in Southwark, shabby as it may be, - more family life in many a one room let to a family, than in many a populous block.[14]

Here 'family life' is considered capable of transforming even the most humble dwelling into a home.

The central place occupied by the family in our society means that other forms of living are judged by this standard and this marginalises those who fall outside the definition

of the 'normal family'. The Census Report of 1871 said that 'the natural family is founded by marriage, and consists, in its complete state of husband, wife and children'.[15] Not only is this definition of the family a narrow one which excludes members of the extended family or other people not related by blood or marriage, it also overlooks the changing and differing nature of 'family' relationships. Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall point out that 'the variability of family forms cannot be overstated; there is no essential 'family' but always families'.[16] Family is as subjective a term as home; who is counted as members of the family varies considerably and may well include people who are not members of the immediate nuclear family. The term household is also an ambiguous one and is broader than the concepts of either home or family. In the context of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries it could include members of the extended family, lodgers, servants and possibly live-in workers or apprentices in addition to the nuclear family. It could also refer to one person living alone, although this was unusual in the period.[17] The use of the term 'head of household' indicates that a hierarchy is presupposed, and the fact that this is generally synonymous with the senior male in the household - husband, father, uncle, brother, or employer - points to the gendered nature of this hierarchy.

THE MEANING OF HOME FOR WOMEN

If popular sayings can encapsulate popular sentiments then a gender difference can certainly be detected in attitudes to the home and men and women's respective places in it. Some sayings, such as 'home sweet home' are gender neutral, but others refer specifically to women, the most obvious and telling one being 'a woman's place is in the home'. The terms 'homebody', 'home-maker' and 'homely' are also associated with women not men. The designation housewife is a very matter of fact summing up of assumptions about women's role in the home, and the term 'house-husband', which has appeared recently to refer to a man who stays at home to look after the

children,[18] was unheard of in the last century, as indeed was the concept. The only popular saying which relates specifically to men is 'an Englishman's home is his castle'[19] and this tells us much about men's expectations of the home as a place of autonomy, control and independence.

These sayings reflect assumptions about the ordering of home life and it is clear that men and women are perceived to have very different roles in it. However, it could well be argued that home and housing are of equal importance to both men and women. We all need the physical shelter that housing provides and the security of some sort of home from which to lead our lives. Why should this be different for men and women? Peter Saunders asserts that the meaning of home as a nurturing and safe haven is the same for men and women,[20] but some feminist commentators have argued that women value their homes in a particular way.[21] There are a number of factors which contribute to this difference, and while it would be mistaken to assume that women are a homogenous group, subject to identical experiences and expectations of the home, there are some features of women's relationship with the home which cut across other differences. In western industrialised society these are primarily to do with women's dependent position, their biological role as mothers, actual or potential, the social and cultural expectations of them - and the emotional and psychological outcomes of such pressures.

There are immediate reasons why home fills the foreground of women's lives in a way that it does not for men. First, there is the need for safety which the home represents. The public space presents a threat to women, of attack, rape or insult which does not exist to the same degree for men. (The fact that this may be a perceived rather than real threat is immaterial to most women's fears, as is the fact that the place where women are most likely to be attacked is their own homes[22]). Second, women tend to

spend far more time in the home than do men, and certainly did so in the last century when it was less common for women to go out to work.

Leaving aside for the moment the situation of single women and childless women, we can also see that women's role as mothers means that they are more tied to the home. Women's lives were dominated by motherhood to a far greater extent in the past. As Dorothy Thompson points out, until the advent of effective birth control most women could expect to spend many years pregnant, child bearing, recovering from childbirth, miscarriage or abortion, breast-feeding and caring for small children.[23] It has been estimated that as recently as 1900 American and European women spent about one third of their life span as a mother in the physical sense - pregnant, nursing or caring for pre-school children compared to about one seventh of their much longer life-spans today.[24] When one considers that the period of child-bearing went on until the menopause and consequently women could be caring for a range of children from babyhood to near adulthood at the same time, it is clear that motherhood could not fail but dominate women's lives.

The Victorian and Edwardian vision of motherhood as 'women's sacred calling' and 'natural mission', became a symbol of identity and status which brought with it both social approval and definition as a woman.[25] The prevailing view of family life, and of women as 'guardians of the sacred hearth, keepers of the holy places of men's lives, the home makers' was very strong,[26] and the counterpart of this was that home assumed a great importance as the symbol of womanly identity. From early childhood girls were socialised into domesticity, the height of their ambitions, marriage. While men might have worked and saved money to provide a future family home, women collected domestic items in the shape of a 'bottom drawer' or 'hope chest', and

practised the domestic skills they would require in the running of their future homes.

Home, as the site of the family, holds a different emotional and psychological significance for women than for men. The work of Nancy Chodorow shows that whereas men are orientated to the external world, girls and women are socialised in such a way that they place great importance on making and sustaining relationships.[27] It has been argued that, whereas for men, work provides a sense of social and personal identity, for women, their status tends to be focused on their domestic role as home-makers and mothers.[28] In historical practice, this has been translated into women living for their families and men individuating out of their families.[29]

Women thus invest more emotional significance in the family than do men, and because home is where women care for their families, home can be a place in which they find fulfilment and contentment. Jane Darke argues that for many women their domestic role is a source of identity, pride and status,[30] and Katherine Hyndley points out that home is the one place where women's influence and knowledge can be allowed to be dominant.[31] However, there is a contradiction in women's special relationship to the home as, while for some women, it is a source of strength, for others it is 'a prison in which they are tied to a domestic treadmill and social isolation'.[32] For women with tyrannical husbands or fathers, domestic servants with bullying employers, home, rather than representing autonomy and fulfilment could represent misery; housework, rather than being a labour of love, could be a thankless and endless drudgery.

Recent feminist analysis has revised the notion of home as domestic haven. Sophie Watson, for example, writes that 'in feminist theory the house for women represents

the site of domestic labour, and often a place of violence and oppression'.[33] In this view, family and marriage are identified as the main sources of female oppression, and all men, of all social classes, are seen to benefit from the free services provided by their wives.[34] Even the Victorian or Edwardian wife of the upper and middle classes, while she did not carry out housework herself, was responsible for the smooth running of the household and the direction of servants, and this in itself was an onerous burden.[35]

Home, in the radical feminist analysis, is also perceived to be the place where the relations of patriarchy can be enforced by physical domination; violence is sometimes part of this and the notion of home as a private family space acts to effectively conceal acts of physical and sexual abuse. Earlier feminists also saw that the home could be a prison rather than a refuge for women. Frances Power Cobbe wrote about the violence which working-class women commonly experienced from their husbands,[36] and Beatrice Webb was shocked by the incest which she discovered took place in the overcrowded tenements of the poor.[37] Such abuse also occurred in middle and upper- class homes,[38] but their greater privacy meant that it could be more easily concealed from the neighbours.

Home-life for women thus contains many different shades of experience within it, some of which are seemingly, but not necessarily, incompatible. Many women must have lived unexceptional home-lives and not questioned their domestic roles. One way in which the importance of home to women can be assessed is by looking at the experiences of women who have lost their homes. Mary Higgs, whose work will be investigated in chapter seven, explored the conditions of homeless women in Edwardian England. While recognising that homelessness could be a traumatic and

degrading experience for anyone, male or female, she said that it was women who felt the loss of a home most keenly:

> But for the one or two men who have unbosomed themselves to me, I could count scores of *women* in similar case. Women with a past, often not an ignoble past. Women who were once mothers, children scattered, old age coming on.....Cannot we take them into pity and find them what they want the most "a home"?[39]

'It is tragic to read,' Mary Higgs wrote, 'that even in the chance and transitory shelter of a common lodging house women "make the place too much of a home"'.[40] One of the reasons given why lodging house keepers were reluctant to take in women was that whereas men generally used the accommodation simply as a place to eat and sleep, 'women are in the kitchen almost the whole day, continually using the cooking utensils and the fire; they wash the former and keep the hearth clean'.[41] Ironically, those very domestic attributes which were supposed to make women 'womanly', made them a nuisance when not in the right place - the private family home. The status inherent in the position of wife, mother and home-maker - the only status to which many women could aspire - was lost to women who became homeless and in losing their homes they also forfeited an important part of their identity.

Home then represents financial, emotional and physical security for women; the mere fact of being a woman dictates that more time is spent in the home and that it fills the foreground of women's lives in a way that it does not for men. These are generalisations and over-simplifications of a vast range of different lived experiences, but it is clear that home occupies a central place in the lives of most women, and a different place from that which it holds for most men. Part of that difference is driven by ideological messages that home **should** be more important to women than to men and it is important to see how that ideology was constructed.

THE IDEOLOGY OF THE HOME

The great significance of 'home', and the widely accepted notion that men and women have different roles within it, are the result of particular historical and social processes. The ideology of the home was constructed in Britain as a concomitant of the processes of industrialisation and urbanisation which took place in Britain over the period from the late eighteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century. The move from a predominantly agricultural economy to an industrial one brought about profound changes in the organization of society. These have been extensively documented and discussed by historians, sociologists and economists and are a matter of continuing debate and contention. Both optimistic and pessimistic views are held of the effects of industrialisation on society, but there is agreement that industrialisation brought about a radical change in working arrangements and family life which had far reaching consequences for the role of women in society.

Many factors were implicated in this process, the fundamental one being the structural change in the economy which came with industrial capitalism and the move to a factory based system of production, a change which required a mobile and wage-dependent workforce, concentrated in towns. It is not my purpose here to detail the complex history of this process, but to examine the consequences of it for women in the shape of the separation of home and workplace and in the casting of men in the role of breadwinner, and women in the role of unpaid housekeeper.

This was not a natural or inevitable development, but a social construction. Davidoff and Hall (1987)[42] in their detailed discussion of this process describe it as one led by the middle classes in the period 1780-1850 and strongly influenced by Evangelical Christianity. They identify the need for the diverse, but increasingly cohesive, middle classes to define for themselves a distinct way of living and ordering their lives which

would distinguish them from both the landowning classes and the lower classes. The evangelistic movement of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century provided a new moral and religious base for this class which gave an imperative to the reordering of family and home life. Home was to become the seat of order, piety and devotion, and it was to be clearly differentiated from the amoral world of the market and the chaotic world of the working classes.

Evangelism had a distinct view of the different roles of men and women, and it was men who were to engage in the public world of work and politics and women who were to maintain the home as the haven of domesticity and morality. This ascribing of gendered roles also entailed the construction of gendered natures in that women were assumed to have certain essential attributes - gentleness, patience, domesticity - which fitted them to the role of home-maker. It also entailed that women should not undertake paid work outside the home, or within it, but devote themselves to providing the domestic framework in which family could meet its spiritual and physical needs. Home had to be physically separated from the world of work in order to provide the separate and private world of the family.

Alongside this moral framework there was an understandable desire for middle-class families to remove themselves from the increasingly polluted and unhealthy environments of towns to the suburbs and beyond, a move that was made possible later in the nineteenth century by the development of railway and tram systems. The possession of a private family home became concrete evidence of wealth, and the ability to support the female members of the family in a state of 'idleness' a mark of male status. Women contributed to the family enterprise by the bearing and raising of children, and the running of the home, but were not expected to engage in commercial or political activities. This was a gradual and uneven process, and there

were anomalies in all classes, but by the mid-nineteenth century it was a model which held true for most middle-class households and one which was held up as the model of family life to which all classes should aspire.[43]

This separation of the worlds of work and the worlds of home was a model led by the middle classes and it is significant in that it entailed the construction and promulgation of a particular ideology by an increasingly powerful social group. This defined the middle-class model of home and family life as the norm and other ways of life as aberrant. Middle-class values were taken to be morally superior and the working classes were to be persuaded to conform to them. The ideal of bourgeois domesticity became one which the higher echelons of the working classes sought to emulate. In pursuit of this male trade unions campaigned for the family wage and the ability of a working man to support his wife and children became a mark of respectability.[44] The male view that women should be excluded from the world of paid work was reflected in the middle classes by restrictions on the entry of women to the professions and, in the working classes, by the lower wages paid to working women.

There was also a general feeling that the exclusion of women from the more onerous and unpleasant parts of the labour force was a mark of progress and civilisation. The Census Report of 1871 described women enumerated under the domestic class as being engaged in 'the most useful of occupations, that of wife, mother and mistress of a family', and contrasted this with the position of women in less advanced societies. 'Among savages they perform the most laborious work; and in Europe now they are seen burdened and toiling in the fields as women were once found toiling underground in English mines'.[45] This is an optimistic view of the changing status of women and one which did not hold true for many women of the working classes. Women were prohibited from working underground by the Mines Act of 1842, but they could still be

found burdened and toiling in this period, not only in the fields but in factories and workshops, and in the homes of the middle and upper classes as servants. This blithe overlooking of the realities of life for most women demonstrates the force of the 'norms' contained in this ideology. Groups which did not conform to it were rendered invisible.

This ideology served both a prescriptive purpose and also an evaluative purpose in that other ways of life could be measured against it. It was a model of life to which few working-class families could conform - the reality was that many women had to work part-time since families could not be supported on their husbands' wages alone, and single women of the working classes had perforce to work for their livings. However, there was an insistent message that women of all classes should stay at home and not engage in paid work outside it. Samuel Smiles, the proponent of 'self-help', deplored the full-time employment of women in factories:

> The performance of domestic duties is her proper office, - the management of her household, the rearing of her family, the economy of the family means, the supplying of the family wants. But the factory takes her from all these duties. Homes become no longer home.....Woman is no more the gentle wife, companion and friend of man, but his fellow labourer and fellow drudge.[46]

Here we see the ideology of separate spheres and the assignation of domestic duties being urged upon women of even the poorest classes.

A rigid belief in the doctrine of separate spheres demanded that women stayed firmly within the private world of the home and that men went out of it to engage in the public world of business, commerce and politics. However, it is important to remember that the division between private and public spheres was to a large extent a rhetorical one. In many homes men and women worked together and shared lives in ways which stretched across the divide of private and public. 'Public was not really public and

private was not really private, despite the potent imagery of separate spheres', say Davidoff and Hall, 'both were ideological constructs with specific meaning which must be understood as products of a particular historic time'.[47] The extent to which capitalism and industrialisation led to a sharp split between the private sphere of home and the public sphere of work and politics has recently been questioned, especially for the working classes.[48] Working-class women carried on with paid work both within and outside the home, and in some occupations, hosiery and shoe-making, for example, the family-based work system continued well on into the nineteenth century.[49]

The artificiality of the public/private divide was also seen through by some middle-class commentators. Emily Davies, the educational pioneer, wrote in 1860:

> It is averred that 'public life is injurious to women; they are meant for the domestic....What is meant by it? Is there any woman living who does not go more or less into public.....The work of a medical practitioner is scarcely more public than that of a district visitor.....the business of a chemist and druggist is no more public than a confectioner.[50]

This is a perceptive critique of the notion of separate spheres which demonstrates the inciveness with which certain early feminists dealt with such abstractions.

There were powerful and influential voices, however, asserting that women's role in the home was a supremely important one and one that offered great responsibilities and privileges. John Ruskin in his famous essay, *In queens' gardens*, set out a classic exposition of the doctrine of separate spheres which speaks most persuasively of the status which it offers women:

> But the woman's power if for rule, not battle, - and her intellect is not for invention or creation, but for sweet ordering, arrangement and decision. She sees the quality of things, their claims, and their places, her great function is praise; she enters into no contest, but

> infallible judges the crown of contest. By her office and place, she is protected from all danger and temptation.[51]

This was an essay addressed to middle-class girls which outlines a model to which they should aspire. It does not talk of the superiority of one sex to another, but of the way in which they complemented each other, and assigns a role to women of great influence. Domestic skills are lauded and the role of wife and mother is held out to be the summit of women's achievement in which women can reign as 'queens' and 'angels', 'Queens you must be,' said Ruskin, 'queens to your lovers; queens to your husbands and your sons'.[52] Such a vision of women - sheltered yet all powerful within the home, repository of all virtue - might seem difficult to resist, however romanticised and idealised. Nevertheless, it was not accepted without question. Mrs Pankhurst, (1858-1928) who was a little girl at the time when this was written, said in her autobiography that she could see no more reason why she should have to stay at home and make it an attractive place for her brothers than that they should stay at home and make it an attractive place for her.[53] One of Octavia Hill's women tenants said that she chose to go out to work, even though she could afford not to, because one could 'not be under obligation to a man!'[54]

Such independent female voices were not often heard, but the notion of home as women's special sphere was one which was also criticised by the influential thinker, J S Mill. He wrote in *The subjection of women* of the way that women's inferior legal and economic status made them helpless victims when male protectors declined to be 'knights in shining armour'.[55] One nineteenth century woman's experience of marriage underlines the truth of this comment; Ellen Weeton's wrote in her autobiography of, 'cruelty from a *monster of a husband*; extreme want and houseless at one time; imprisonment and bruises at another'.[56] There were many features of the Victorian marriage and property laws which reinforced the dependent status of women. Jose

Harris sums up the unenviable position of married women in mid-Victorian Britain in the following terms:

> An English husband..... had an absolute right of control over his wife's person and, unless constrained by a private settlement, over her property as well. A wife, by contrast, had no legal duties and no enforceable legal rights.....She could not hold separate property or enter into contracts; nor could she take proceedings against her husband to enforce her claim to financial support..... Under the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857 an act of adultery constituted automatic grounds for divorce if committed by a wife, while a husband's adultery counted as an offence only if accompanied by desertion or cruelty. A wife who left her husband's home, for whatever reason, could be forcibly restored to him by an order of the courts.[57]

Women could also be beaten or imprisoned by their husbands with no legal redress.[58] There were very real reasons then why home may have been a site of oppression for women and these were underlined by the fact that it was inescapable for women of all classes. Divorce was not only difficult but unthinkable for women of the upper and middle classes who would face social ostracism and disgrace if they left their husbands, and financially impossible for working-class women.[59] Happiness in marriage is not guaranteed and while some women may have been fortunate in this, for those who were not, there was little option but to suffer it.

Single women did not lose their right to legal existence, but they did not have the independence which single men enjoyed. Paid work was held to be incompatible with the status of a lady and women of the middle and upper classes did not generally have the option of going into employment or leaving home. Some women rebelled against this: Sophia Jex-Blake, for example, left home in 1860 to study at Queen's College in London, lived alone and defied her father's wishes by taking a salary for teaching work at the College.[60] By the 1880s and 90s this was more becoming more common,[61] but, on the whole, single women of the middle and upper classes were expected to

remain as 'daughters at home'. This could be a stultifying existence. Julia Wedgewood wrote in 1869:

> You may call it domestic life when half-a-dozen grown up sisters live together with a sufficient staff of servants; but I can hardly find a state of things less favourable to happiness and concord that than they should all try and find occupation and interest in the affairs of the household.[62]

It could also be a wretched existence. Florence Nightingale expressed the frustration which many 'daughters at home' must have felt when she wrote of the state of 'infancy' or 'silent misery' imposed by family expectations.[63]

Despite these glaring anomalies, it is important to remember that virtually all organs of opinion, including the organized feminist movement, paid lip service to the idealised vision of the home and women's special role within it. Both suffragists and anti-suffragists called upon the home in defence of their opposing cases. Millicent Fawcett in *Home and Politics* wrote that it was because 'to women as mothers, is given the charge of the home and the care of children....[that] we want the home and the domestic side of things to count for more in politics and in the administration of public life than they do at present'.[64] The anti-suffragists also evoked the home in support of their cause and argued that the entry of women into political life would lead to domestic strife and neglect of the home.[65] Home was an icon which could be called upon in support of almost any cause and it would be a brave person who challenged it.

As we have seen there is much evidence that the ideology of the home was far removed from the lived experience of many women. It served to prescribe a certain pattern of living and stigmatised or marginalised those who could not conform to it. It ascribed to women certain essential qualities, skills and aptitudes which confined their

lives and denied them the opportunity to exercise other skills or realise other opportunities. However, some commentators have suggested that it also gave women a new authority, as the repositories of domestic knowledge, and that, ultimately, this was liberating for them.

THE IDEOLOGY OF THE HOME AS A LIBERATING FORCE?

There are conflicting views over the effects which industrialisation, and the divide between work and home, had on the lives of women. As Harriet Bradley points out, the view taken of the effects of industrialisation depends to a large extent upon the interpretation made of the economic and social status of women before capitalist development.[66] She cites Alice Clark's classic study, *The working life of women in the seventeenth century* (1919), as 'paramount among pessimistic accounts' of industrialisation. Clark argued that in pre-industrial times marriage was a partnership, men and women shared in productive and domestic work, and while there was 'a sexual division of labour, women's contribution was equally valued with men's. The onset of capitalist methods of production, wage labour, the concept of the individual rather than household wage and the separation of home and workplace eroded women's economic role and with it their social status. Other writers also subscribe to this view. Wekerle, for example, writes that 'economists from Engels to Galbraith have argued that the privatisation of services within the home are antithetical to women's emancipation.[67] Mabel Atkinson of the Fabian Women's Group argued that the industrial revolution, by removing industry away from the home, forced working-class women into poorly paid factory work and reduced middle-class women to parasitism.[68]

Against this it has been contended that the process which led to the construction of a special role for women in the home, was a creative and liberating force for women.

Shorter (1976)[69] argues that the market liberated women from the cage of the patriarchal home, Ivy Pinchbeck (1930)[70] that capitalism, by its power to generate social prosperity, provided women with a totally new option - the choice not to work - and to become a full-time domestic worker. The positive features of the new role of women as home-makers are also explored in Patricia Branca's study, *Silent Sisterhood*, (1975)[71] which emphasised women's social contribution as pioneers of modern household management, child care methods and consumption.

The French social philosopher, Michel Foucault,[72] has also developed an interesting perspective on the role of the domestic ideology which sees it as creating a new role for women, and in some senses acting as a liberating rather than oppressive force. The notion of discourse is an important element of Foucault's analysis and it is argued that, in the context of the discourse over the health of the nation in the nineteenth century, an alliance arose between male social and medical reformers on the one hand, and women, as wives and mothers on the other. Concern over public health and child welfare led to intervention by the state and social reformers into the private sphere of the family. Women as the repository of domestic and child care expertise were the target of intervention. The acknowledgement of women's authority in these matters led to an undermining of the previously unquestioned authority of the father within the home and hence acted to undermine patriarchy. In this view, the notion of the private sphere and the role of housewife and mother, now seen as traps for women, originally gave them a greater authority within the family and thus arguably can be said to have been emancipatory.

This is a reversal of the usual negative view taken of Victorian domestic ideology by more recent feminists. It points to the ambiguous nature of that ideology for women, and the possibility of different 'readings' of history. It is a view that is given

substantiation by the proliferation of booklets and pamphlets on 'healthy homes' which appeared in the period which were aimed at women, and underlined their special responsibilities in the home. A pamphlet issued by the National Health Society in the late nineteenth century, for example, lauded the power and authority of women in domestic affairs, and emphasised the 'new' knowledge involved:

> She whose domain this science concerns, the guardian of family life, the queen of home, the housekeeper, is the one whom this new knowledge so greatly effects, and for whom it means so much. A new dignity surrounds the office of women, new responsibilities, possibilities and contingencies attend her path; a new aim rises before her in that she, in her own small individual home, must take her share in the great warfare against preventable disease. It is difficult to imagine a nobler task, a grander field for mental activities, intellectual interests and noble ambitions. The safety, health, prosperity and capacity for usefulness and enjoyment, the very length of life of the inmates of the home, depends upon just how far the woman at the helm is able to make her selections, decisions, arrangements and plan according to those beneficent laws of nature which underline the science of home-life.[73]

This was aimed at women as wives and mothers, and by extension it gave a new authority to middle-class women to pronounce upon, and intervene, in the domestic affairs of others. Such intervention was reinforced and justified by the ideological message that women's special role was in the private sphere of home, family - and by extension - locality. Women of the middle classes, excluded from economic activity outside the home, were able to find a role in voluntary work with the poor which, while often expanding into full-time, and later in the period, paid work, could still be accommodated under their traditional 'private' role.

In general, it was unpaid voluntary work with the poor which was urged upon the daughters of the middle classes. This duty extended to married women of the middle classes, but for single women, who did not have the demands of marriage and

motherhood placed upon them, it filled a much larger part of their existence. As Sally Alexander points out, whatever restrictions on economic and sexual activity masculine authority might have imposed, charitable work, "poor peopling" as Florence Nightingale called it, was a legitimate activity for even the most sheltered girl of the Victorian period.[74] The moral imperative placed upon women to occupy themselves with improving the lives of the poor, and in particular with work focused upon women and children, provided the grounding in areas of work such as social work, housing management and health visiting which was to provide an entree into the world of paid employment, particularly for single women of the middle classes.

Shared experience of family and home was seen as a common ground which could over-ride the divisions of social class. Octavia Hill said in an address to district visitors in 1877:

> Depend upon it, if we thought of the poor primarily as husbands, wives, sons or daughters, members of households as we ourselves instead of contemplating them as a different class, we should recognise better how the home training and high ideal of home duty was our best preparation for work among them.[75]

Home duty in the shape of family links and obligations was what was held to join all members of society, and it was on this basis that middle-class women could relate to members of the working class. This was a common thread in women's work with the poor at the time, but it is interesting that it was often single women who were involved - who had no experience of bringing up a family themselves, let alone under the straitened circumstances of working-class women. The mere fact of being middle class seems to have been an adequate qualification to advise working-class women on domestic and child-care practice. Octavia Hill herself did not express this difference in terms of class, but of the advantages which she had in terms of education and training. Those women who had the advantage of education, however, were members

of the middle classes who often based their ideas of suitable domestic arrangements on their own family experiences, and this led to a view of working-class arrangements as inadequate or aberrant, rather than as adaptions to different circumstances.

The intervention of middle-class women into the lives of the poor raises huge questions about the border line between the public and private spheres, and the way that women mediated this,[76] and also about the extent to which women activists utilised or challenged the ideology of the home in their move into various forms of housing and social work, and these will be addressed in the discussion of the work of Octavia Hill in chapter four.

THE MEANING OF HOME FOR WORKING-CLASS WOMEN

The ideology of the home may have been empowering for middle-class women, but what of the women who could not conform to the standards demanded by this domestic ideology? What meaning did the notion of separate spheres and home as a special and hallowed place have for women of the working classes? Was 'home' even possible in the housing of the poor?

The question of housing conditions will be discussed more fully in the next chapter, but it is worth noting here that there were many strata contained within the ranks of the working class and that standards of housing varied between them. At the top end of the scale skilled artisans and small tradesmen, who could rely on a regular wage, could afford to maintain their families without the necessity of their wives going out to work. Small houses or sets of rooms could be afforded and a modicum of comfort and security enjoyed. Further down the scale families had to cram into one room, in houses shared with several other families, and moves were frequent. The casual and itinerant poor were likely to lead a life of semi-homelessness shifting between lodging houses

and the workhouse and were unable to make any sort of permanent home for themselves. Even given the gradations between the relatively comfortable top end of the working classes and the desperately poor at the bottom end, it is clear that the sort of housing in which the working classes lived fell far below the standards of the middle classes.

Maud Pember Reeves in her survey of the living conditions of the 'respectable poor' in Lambeth 1909- 1913, *Round About a Pound a Week*, recorded that the houses were dark, damp and insanitary, frequently infested with bugs and rats, and that sleeping four to a bed was common.[77] These were not the poorest people of the district, she said but men, 'respectable in full work, at a more or less top wage', their wives, 'quiet, decent, keeping themselves to themselves kind of women'.[78] If this was the housing of the respectable poor, the living conditions of those further down the scale were much worse. Such housing was a far cry from the haven of domestic bliss conjured up by middle-class depictions of the home and, even given different expectations, it is difficult to imagine that anyone could have valued living in overcrowded, damp and bug-infested accommodation.

As we have seen, however, the meaning of home can transcend physical surroundings, and even the poorest dwelling could have significance for its inhabitants. Attachment to home for the poor was probably more associated with possessions than with a fixed place of abode because the experience of frequent moves and 'flits' between lodgings must have made attachment to a particular dwelling unwise. Possessions were important though as often they were the only permanent feature in people's lives.[79] Ellen Chase, one of Octavia Hill's housing workers in Deptford in the 1880s, said that the word 'home' was invariably used by her tenants to mean their furniture rather than their lodgings. On one occasion, visiting an old couple who had

applied to be tenants, she noticed that their rooms were completely empty. On being asked where her 'home' was, the old lady replied 'Why at my sister's to be sure'.[80]

Ruskin gives a moving account of one working-class family's tragedy which vividly demonstrates the importance of home to them. He relates the newspaper report of an inquest carried out in 1867 into the death of Michael Collins, a 'translator' of boots, (a mender of old boots to sell to shops). Michael Collins died from starvation; the coroner, on hearing that the family had never had enough to eat, said to Collins's wife, 'it seems to me deplorable that you did not go into the workhouse'. She replied, 'we wanted the comforts of our little home'. A juror asked what the comforts were, for he saw only a little straw in the corner of the room, the windows of which were broken. The witness began to cry, and said they had a quilt and other little things. The deceased said he would never go into the workhouse'.[81]

To a middle-class observer such as the juror, this poor dwelling was bereft of any of the attributes of home, but it had great value to the family who lived in it. To those accustomed to it by daily living, it represented much more than the bare walls he saw and was invested with emotional significance. It also represented self respect as it meant that a home of one's own could be maintained and the degradation of the workhouse avoided. Indeed such was this man's horror of the workhouse that he died rather than go into it. In this sense home had great meaning to the poor as the alternatives for those who lost their homes were so dire - a life of casual homelessness or the workhouse - that the maintaining of the home, no matter how humble, was desperately important. As Fried and Elman point out 'a hovel with the family around might count as home whereas the better material conditions of the workhouse did not'.[82] The workhouse meant loss of respectability, loss of the

possibility of earning a living and separation of family members. Having a home, no matter how wretched, represented a bulwark against this.

The middle-class notion of home as refuge from the hurly-burly of the world also held very little relevance for the working classes. Indeed it was reversed because home was likely to be so overcrowded and comfortless that refuge might be sought, not in it, but from it - by husbands in the pub and by older children leaving home for 'living-in' situations. There was no privacy in the working-class home as living in one room, or small set of rooms, meant that all functions and activities had an audience. Socialising, leisure-pursuits and hospitality were not real possibilities in the single rooms in which many poor families lived and the pub had great attraction for working-class men and less respectable working-class women. A Temperance Society Tract of 1901 stated that, 'most men have some particular public house to which they go nearly every night in the week; it is their sitting room - their own home being a sort of kitchen, where the servant (the wife) does the household drudgery'.[83] There may have been some overstating of the case here for propaganda purposes, but it is probable that for men at least, the pub acted as an extension of the working-class home.

But while men may have been able to escape to the pub, women with children to care for, and some pretensions to respectability, could not take this route. They were as confined to the home as middle-class women, with the difference that their homes were far from comfortable and were also the place of both unpaid domestic work and often paid work as well. Dorothy Thompson describes the home-life of working-class women in this period as typically consisting of 'washing, sewing, knitting, mending, looking after lodgers and babies of working mothers, taking part in manufacturing and recycling of cheap clothing and cheap shoes'.[84] The taken-for-granted assumption

that women were responsible for the cleanliness of the home must have made the all-pervading dirt much harder to bear for them. The Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes of 1884 talked of 'floors which a woman could not scrub', (because they were too rotten), and said that 'under such conditions the most cleanly woman could not be clean'.[85] Robert Roberts writing of his Edwardian childhood in the slums of Salford, commented on the soul-destroying effects which such conditions had upon women:

> Women wore their lives away washing clothes in heavy, iron-hooped tubs, scrubbing wood and stone, polishing furniture and fire-irons. There were housewives who finally lost real interest in anything save dirt removing.[86]

In the process, he says, some women went mad and were taken away to lunatic asylums.

Street and neighbourhood life was an important part of working-class life. Ellen Chase commented on the street in which she worked in Deptford, 'so many of our people, young and old, passed their time leaning out of the windows, sitting on the steps, or swarming at play in the middle of the road'.[87] The shared housing and inward-looking courts of working-class areas entailed a much more public, visible and communal life than did the separate dwellings of the middle classes, marked off by hedges, drives and walls. The sheer proximity of working-class housing made involvement and interest in each other's lives unavoidable. Life was lived in earshot, if not in eye-sight, of neighbours; entrances and stairways, washrooms and privies were shared with the other tenants of the house, and people were much more intimately involved in each others' lives. The fact of desperate poverty was also shared and women, who bore the brunt of managing their household resources, could often only manage to get through hard times, with the help of their neighbours.[88] Paradoxically, it was those with pretensions to respectability, who emulated the domestic privacy of the middle-

class home and 'kept themselves to themselves' who suffered the most in times of hardship because they excluded themselves from this system of neighbourhood support. Margaret Wynne Nevinson, who worked as a rent-collector in the East End, wrote of such tenants that they sometimes actually starved rather than ask for help from their neighbours.[89] The interdependence of the poor, particularly in the way women organized their lives, may have been as much a strategy for survival, as a reflection of warm neighbourhood values, but it was very important none-the-less.

One aspect of the ideology of the home, that of women having prime responsibility for all domestic affairs, was certainly met in the lives of working-class women. In addition to housework, they were generally also responsible for the managing of the family budget, paying the rent, and negotiating with tally-men, debt collectors, Poor Law officials and charity workers. Ellen Chase commented that it was 'taken for granted that the people who applied for housing were women'[90] and Octavia Hill said of her experience with the Charity Organization Society that, 'the application for help is nearly always made by the wife'.[91] Home revolved around the woman just as much in working-class households as in middle-class ones and expectations of the domestic role of wife and mother were very high. Evidence given by witnesses to the Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes in 1884 emphasised the influence which wives had, or should have, on the well-being of their families. The Rev Benjamin Sharpe said, 'the employment of women takes away from the character of a house very much; where a woman is away from home it makes it very comfortless'[92] and the Rev A T Fryer commented that 'the mother's lack of power of management is the chief cause of drink. If she is a bad manager the husband will always go away to the public house'.[93]

These statements may well have been based on middle-class ideological views rather than on empirical evidence, but they reinforce the message that women were expected to have the major responsibility for the well-being of the home, even if their material circumstances militated against any possibility of doing this adequately by middle-class standards. Staying at home to devote oneself to domestic activities was an impossibility for many working-class women and high levels of cleanliness were difficult to achieve in a crumbling tenement with no running water. This is not to say that women of the working classes were unaware of the expected standards. Maud Pember Reeves commented that the housewives she interviewed:

> Generally appeared to be conscious that the strange lady would probably like to sit in a draft, and if complimented on her knowledge of the value of fresh air and open windows, she might report in a weary manner commonplaces on the subject which had obviously been picked up from nurse, doctor or sanitary inspector.[94]

As we have seen, it was women who were the targets of intervention in improving standards of household management and child-rearing and they were subject to visits in their homes from a variety of well-meaning officials and charity workers, usually women, bearing tracts and advice on how they should run their homes.[95] This was a form of surveillance and one can see that exposure to the continual repetition of these values could have been very controlling in that it can result in the internalisation of certain 'norms'.

Self-policing is a very effective way of bringing about desired forms of behaviour in that it can eventually dispense with the need for externally imposed disciplines. Through a variety of means the middle-class ideology of the home became a shared social vision. It might have been tacitly acknowledged that such standards could not be met, but they were aspired to all the same. The judgement of neighbours can also be a powerful force in ensuring that efforts are made to conform. 'She keeps a clean

home', 'her children are always well turned out' are expressions which imply approval and reflect directly on a woman's housewifely and mothering skills.[96]

SINGLE WOMEN

The way of life of working-class families may have been considered wanting by the middle classes, but at least it conformed to the central tenet of contemporary ideology, that of consisting of a family. The centrality of family to society marginalised and stigmatised other forms of living and nowhere was this more apparent than in the case of single women. In a society in which there was a surplus of women over men, and this was the case throughout the nineteenth century and beyond, it was not possible for all women to marry.[97] Despite this basic demographic fact, women were blamed for their inability to marry.[98] Described as 'surplus women', they were pitied or derided and their situation in all classes was an invidious one. The very word spinster has taken on derogatory connotations and the *New Oxford Dictionary* published in 1998 defines it as 'referring to or alluding to a stereotype of an older woman who is childless, prissy and repressed'.[99] These appellations had force for women of all classes, and whatever one's status in life the failure to marry was considered just that - a failure.

While single women might have been caricatured as lonely old maids, it is important to remember that there were many single women who enjoyed their homes. Frances Power Cobbe, a wealthy middle-class woman, compared the home life of a single woman most favourably with that of a single man:

> A man, be he rich or poor, who returns at night to a home adorned by no woman's presence and domestic cares, is at best dreary and uncomfortable. But a woman makes her home for herself, and surrounds herself with the atmosphere of taste and the little details of housewifely comforts.[100]

The insistent message that women's true happiness could only be found in marriage overlooked evidence that many women found fulfilment outside it. Recent research has shown that many women did well out of the commercial and industrial revolutions and were able to sustain a life-style well above subsistence.[101] Not all single women were needy widows or impoverished old maids, but the fact that their existence was little acknowledged is telling in that it demonstrates the strength of ideology in constructing and perpetuating 'stereotypes'.

There are no equivalents of the derogatory expressions of 'old maid' or 'on the shelf' for men. Statistically they had more chance of being married and less likelihood of widowhood. Single men of the middle and upper classes were able to employ servants to ensure the smooth running of their home and a housekeeper to fill the domestic role of a wife and figures show male headed households were twice as likely to have three or more servants than those headed by a woman.[102] The existence of gentlemen's clubs also gave unattached men an alternative to home life and access to social conviviality which their female counterparts could not share.

In general, most single women of the middle and upper classes enjoyed materially comfortable and secure homes but this was not the case for single women of the working classes because they had to earn their living and their earning power was weaker than that of their male equivalents. The main way in which most working-class single women secured a roof over their heads was by going into work which provided accommodation, into service or dress or shop work, but 'living-in' effectively excluded them from the conventional concept of 'home'.

CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this chapter has been to show why home and housing are of such central importance in the lives of women, and how the gendered difference which exists between men and women's experience of the home affects the significance they attach to it. The difference between 'home' and 'housing' has been explored and we have seen that home is associated with family and emotional ties in a way that makes it of special importance to women. The ideology of the home constructed over the period arose as a concommitment of social and economic changes and enforced material and cultural changes in the organization of work and family life which shaped women's overwhelming investment in the sphere of the home. This construct of the home had real consequences in the shape of expectations about masculinity - as represented in the role of father, breadwinner and provider, and about femininity - as represented in the role of wife, mother and home-maker. This ideology, while being a powerful force, as we have seen, disguised many anomalies in the realities of people's lives and marginalised the experiences of those who could not conform to it. It also acted as an effective controlling force and shaped the expectations of even the poorest members of society. Much of the ideology of the home was not realistic, it denied the basic facts of life for many women, and it prescribed them a role and qualities which may well have been at variance with their inclinations.

Feminist critiques of the home as a place of patriarchal oppression for women have been contrasted with more optimistic analyses of the force which the domestic ideology had in creating a new role for women, one which was based on their authority as possessors of the newly respected expertise in the 'science of the home'. This authority acted as a springboard for middle-class women activists seeking a new role outside their own homes and paved the way for women to intervene in the housing and home lives of the poor. Paradoxically, it was these women, housing reformers

such as Octavia Hill and her fellow workers, acting on and propagating bourgeois domestic ideology, who more than most others, saw the reality of working-class women's home lives and thus the limited applicability of that ideology to their lives. The extent to which they worked within that ideology, and the extent to which they challenged it, will be explored in chapter four dealing with the work of Octavia Hill. First, however, it is necessary to set the involvement of women in housing in historical context and the next chapter will deal with housing conditions and housing reform in the period.

NOTES

1. John Ruskin, 'Of queens' gardens' in Sesame and Lilies, George Allen, 1899, p.109

2. Report of the committee appointed to consider the question of the housing of the poor, Manchester Diocesan Conference on housing, John Heywood, 1902, p.17

3. See, for example, G Allen and G Crowe, Home and family: creating the domestic sphere, Macmillan, 1989; Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, Family fortunes: men and women of the English middle classes 1780-1950, Hutchinson, 1987; Peter Saunders, A nation of home-owners, Unwin Hyman, 1990; Sophie Watson and Helen Austerberry, Housing and homelessness: a feminist perspective, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986; D Benjamin and D Stea, (eds.), The home: interpretation, meaning and environments, Avebury, 1995

4. Sophie Watson and Helen Austerberry, 1986, op.cit., p.9

5. See Peter Saunders, 1990, op.cit., p.263

6. Marion Roberts, Living in a man-made world: gender assumptions in modern housing design, Routledge, 1991, p.6

7. Mrs Fawcett, 'Home and politics', in Jane Lewis, (ed.), Before the vote was won, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987, p.420

8. See Marina Warner, 'Home: our famous island race', the Reith Lectures 1994, reprinted in The Independent, 3 March, 1994

9. See interviews conducted with women living in temporary accommodation, in Watson and Austerberry, op.cit., pp.91-107

10. Dora Greenhill, *Home*, in the Cornhill Magazine, September 1863, quoted in A Oakley and J Mitchell, (eds.), The Rights and Wrongs of Women, Penguin Books, 1983, p.139

11. See Kathleen Dayus, 'How sweet was home? working-class experiences of the family in the home 1900-1955', Social History Bulletin, Volume 23, Spring 1998, Number 1, p.19

12. See Marion Roberts, 'Designing the home: domestic architecture and domestic life', in G Allen and G Crow, (eds), Home and family: creating the domestic sphere, Macmillan, 1989, p.6

13. See, for example, Watson and Austerberry, 1986, Saunders, 1990, for discussion of this.

14. Octavia Hill, 'Influence of character' in Charles Booth, Life and Labour of the people in London, Vol II, Williams & Norgate, 1891, p.267

15. Census of England and Wales, 1871, PP 1873 LXXI Part II, p.xx

16. Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, Family fortunes: men and women of the English middle classes, 1780-1850, Hutchinson, 1987

17. The 1911 census showed that only 1.2% of households consisted of one person, (Census of England and Wales, 1911, PP 1917-18 Cd 8941 xxxv, 483, p.171) compared with 11% in the 1991 census, (OPCS Census of Great Britain, 1991, Household and family composition, 10%, HMSO, 1994)

18. See Seth Gillman, 'Him indoors', in The Guardian, 12 August 1998

19. The expression has been dated back to the sixteenth century and it is used of man/men alone, and by implication, of men and women together, but it is not used of a woman/women alone, The Oxford Dictionary of English Idioms, (1993) p.166.

20. P Saunders, op.cit.

21. See, for example, Jane Darke, 'Women and the meaning of home' in Rose Gilroy and Roberta Woods, Housing Women, Routledge, 1994, and Donna Shalala's foreword to C Stimpson et al, Women and the American City, University of Cambridge, 1981, p.vii

22. Figures for England and Wales show that it 1989 almost one third of recorded violence against women involved domestic violence, but the 1988 British Crime Survey suggests that when unreported incidents are taken into account, the figures rise to around half, Bernadette Frayne and Jenny Muir, Nowhere to run, London Housing Unit, 1994, p.24

23. Dorothy Thompson, 'Spinning a golden yarn', Times Higher Education Supplement, 16 February, 1996

24. Rayna Rapp et al, 'Examining family history', in J Newton et al, (eds), Sex and class in women's history, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983, p.240

25. See, for example, Eliza Linton's article, 'Womanliness' in The Girl of the Period, 1883 in Janet Murray, Strong-minded women, Penguin, 1984

26. Ray Strachey, The Cause: a short history of the women's movement in Great Britain, Virago, p.77

27. Nancy Chodorow, The reproduction of mothering: psychoanalysis and the sociology of gender, University of California, 1978

28. Harriet Bradley, Men's work, women's work: a sociological history of the sexual division of labour, Polity Press, 1989, p.8

29. Rayna Rapp et al, op cit, p.252

30. See Jane Darke, 'Women and the meaning of home' in Rose Gilroy and Roberta Woods, Housing Women, Routledge, 1994

31. Kate Hyndley, Women and the family, Wayland (Publishers) Ltd., 1989, p.5

32. Ruth Madigan, Moira Munro and Susan Smith, 'Gender and the meaning of home' in the International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, Vol.14, Number 4, 1990, p.632

33. Sophie Watson, Women and housing or feminist housing analysis?, Housing Studies, Vol.1, No. 1, January 1986, p.1

34. Orbach and Eichenbaum write: 'in the course of being a wife the woman will be required to set up a house, organize all household matters as smoothly and efficiently as she can, be a helpmate to her husband, making sure that all the things he needs in his daily life are available - that his meals are cooked, that his clothes are at the ready and so forth'. (Susie Orbach and Luise Eichenbaum, What do women want? Joseph, 1983)

35. See Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management, London, Chancellor Press, 1861

36. Frances Power Cobbe, 'Wife torture in England' in the Contemporary Review, April 1876

37. See Beatrice Webb, My apprenticeship, Longman Green, 1926

38. See, for example, the experiences of Caroline Norton beaten by her husband, and Virginia Woolf, sexually abused by her half-brother.

39. Mary Higgs and Edward Hayward, Where shall she live? The homelessness of the woman worker, P S Kings and Sons, 1910, pp.158-9

40. Ibid, p.159

41. Ibid

42. Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, Family Fortunes: men and women of the English middle classes 1780-1950, Hutchinson, 1987

43. According to Catherine Hall 'there is plenty of evidence to suggest that by the 1830s and 40s the definition of woman as primarily relating to the home was well-established'.(Catherine Hall, 'The early formation of Victorian domestic ideology' in Sandra Burman, (ed), Fit work for women, 1979, p.15)

44. Harriet Bradley, Men's work, women's work: a sociological history of the sexual division of labour, Polity Press, 1989, p.44

45. Census of England and Wales, 1871, PP (1873) Vol.IV, General report, p.xli

46. Samuel Smiles, Character, Murray, 1890 (first written in a paper of 1843)

47. L Davidoff and C Hall, op.cit., p.33

48. Harriet Bradley, op.cit., p.42

49. Ibid

50. Emily Davies, Letters to a Daily Paper, Newcastle, 1860 in Patricia Hollis, Women in public: the women's movement 1850-1900, George Allen & Unwin, 1979, p.6

51. John Ruskin, op.cit., p.109

52. Ibid, p.135

53. Emmeline Pankhurst, My own story, Eveleigh Nash, 1914, p.6

54. Elizabeth Sturge, Reminiscences of my life and some of the children of William and Charlotte Sturge and of the Sturge family of Bristol, printed for private circulation, 1928, p.49.

55. J S Mill, 'The subjection of women', 1869, quoted in Jane R Chapman & Margaret Gates, (eds), The victimization of women, Sage Publications, p.18

56. Ellen Weeton, personal letter quoted in J Swindells, Victorian writing and working women: the other side of silence, Polity Press, 1985, p.151

57. Jose Harris, Private lives, public spirit: a social history of Britain 1870-1914, Oxford University Press, 1993, pp.73-74

58. It was not until 1891 that it was ruled that a husband had no legal right to coerce his wife or to confine her against her will.

59. Divorce was legalised in the 1857 Matrimonial Causes Act, but it was rare and generally only available to the wealthy.

60. See Margaret Todd, The life of Sophia Jex-Blake, Macmillan, 1918

61. See Juliet Gardner, The new woman, Collins & Brown, 1993

62. Julia Wedgwood, 'Female suffrage, considered chiefly with regard to its indirect results', in Josephine Butler, op.cit., p.264

63. Quoted in Pamela Horne, Ladies of the manor: wives and daughter in country house society 1830-1918, Allan Sutton Publishing Ltd., 1991, p.145

64. Millicent Fawcett, op.cit., p.419

65. See, for example, the cartoon 'A suffragette's home', John Hassall, National League for Opposing Women's Suffrage, 1912, in Diane Atkinson, Funny Girls: cartooning for equality, Penguin Books, 1997, p.18

66. Harriet Bradley, op.cit., p.33

67. Gerda R Wekerle, 'Women in the urban environment' in C Stimpson et al, Women and the American city, University of Cambridge, 1981, p.189

68. Sally Alexander, Introduction to Maud Pember Reeves, Round about a pound a week, Virago, 1988, p.xv

69. E Shorter, 'Women's work: what difference did capitalism make?' in Theory and Society, 3:4, pp.513-29', cited in Harriet Bradley, op.cit., p.34

70. Ivy Pinchbeck, Women workers and the Industrial Revolution, 1930, cited in H Bradley, op.cit., p.40

71. Patricia Branca, Silent sisterhood, middle class women in the Victorian home, Croom Helm, 1975

72. The analysis of Foucault's ideas is taken from the discussion of the rise of health visiting contained in Open University, Social problems and social welfare, Block 2, Unit 11, Open University Press, 1994, pp.61-75

74. Clare Goslett, The science of home life, National Health Society, Allman & Son, n.d., pp.1-2

74. Sally Alexander, Introduction to Maud Pember Reeves, op. cit., p.xi

75. Octavia Hill, Our Common Land, Macmillan & Co., 1877, p.25

76. See Anne Digby, 'Victorian values and women in public and private', in T C Smout, (ed.), Victorian values: a joint symposium of the Royal Society of Edinburgh and the British Academy, 1990, Proceedings of the British Academy 78, Oxford University Press, 1992

77. Maud Pember Reeves, op.cit., p.46

78. Ibid, introduction, p.ix

79. See evidence given to the Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes by Lord Shaftesbury on the constantly shifting nature of many working class lives. (RCHWC, 1885, Vol.I. Report, p.15)

80. Ellen Chase, Tenant friends in old Deptford, Williams and Norgate Ltd, p.87

81. John Ruskin, op. cit., p.62

82. A Fried and R Elman, Charles Booth's London, Hutchinson & Co., 1969

83. F D Perrot, Overcrowding and drink, Church of England's Temperance Society's Publications, Popular Tracts for the People, No.15, 1901, p.3

84. Dorothy Thompson, 1996, op.cit

85. RCHWC, Vol 1, 1885, p.15

86. Robert Roberts, The classic slum: Salford life in the first quarter of the century, Penguin Books Ltd., 1974, p.37

87. Ellen Chase, op.cit, p.39

88. See Ellen Ross, 'Survival networks; women's neighbourhood sharing in London before World War One', in History Workshop, Issue 15, Spring 1983, Love and Toil, motherhood in outcast London , Oxford University Press, 1993, Elizabeth Roberts, A woman's place: an oral history of working class women 1890-1940, Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1984

89. Margaret Wynne Nevinson, Life's fitful fever, A. & C. Black, 1926,

90. Ellen Chase, op cit, p.31

91. Octavia Hill, 'A more excellent way of charity', in Our Common Land, Macmillan & Co, 1877, p.84

92. RCHWC, op.cit., p.62

93. Ibid, p.79

94. Maud Pember Reeves, op. cit., p.16

95. The Rev. M Walmont, Honorary Secretary of the Metropolitan Visiting and Relief Association wrote in 1877 of three parishes in the East End that they were visited by 'about thirty visitors, mostly ladies, in addition to eight relieving officers, ten or twelve School Board visitors, three agents of the Charity Organization Society, about fifty clergy, twelve almoners of the Society for the Relief of Distress, above one hundred lay agents, such as City Missionaries, and quite an army of Sunday School teachers who visit the homes of the poor from time to time'. (Helen Bosanquet, Social work in London, 1869-1912, Harvester Press Ltd., 1973, first published 1914)

96. See Carl Chinn, They worked all their lives, women of the urban poor in England 1880-1939, Manchester University Press, 1988

97. In 1861 there were 1,053 females per 1,000 males and in 1911 1,0681 females per 1,000 males. (Census of England and Wales, 1911, PP 1917-18 Cd.8491 xxxv, 483, General Report, p.21)

98. See, for example, the article 'Queen bees or working bees' which appeared in the Saturday Review in 1859: 'married life is a woman's profession; and to this life her training - that of dependence - is modelled. Of course by not getting a husband, or losing him, she may find she is without resources. All that can be said of her is, she has failed in business....' (Quoted in Ray Strachey, op.cit., p.98)

100. New Oxford Dictionary quoted in The Guardian, 13 August 1998

100. Frances Power Cobbe quoted in course handbook, Women's history: Victorian Britain, Oxford Brookes University, 1997, p.47, no further details given

101. Christine Wiskin, 'After hours: English businesswomen and leisure in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries', Social History Bulletin, Volume 23, Spring 1998, Number 1, p. 63

102. L Davidoff and C Hall, op cit, p.388

Chapter 3

HOUSING CONDITIONS AND HOUSING REFORM

The walls are damp and crumbling, the ceiling is black and peeling off, showing the laths above, the floor is rotten and broken away in places, and the wind and the rain sweep in through gaps that seem to be everywhere. The woman, her husband, and her six children live, eat, and sleep in this one room, and for this they pay three shillings a week.
(George R Sims, The Dark Side of Life, 1883[1])

Conditions such as those described above are familiar to us from the pens of a host of nineteenth-century writers. Novelists such as Dickens, Mrs Gaskell, and Charles Kingsley gave moving descriptions of the conditions of the poor, social investigators such as Mayhew[2] and Charles Booth[3] made exhaustive investigations into the way the poor lived, a number of major government inquiries into housing were carried out[4], and national newspapers published exposees of the miseries of working-class living conditions.[5] Rubenstein comments that descriptions of how slum dwellers lived could fill several books on London alone.[6] The process of housing reform has also been well documented, and historians have described the efforts of public health campaigners, government legislators, social reformers and philanthropists to overcome what was a protracted housing crisis.[7]

Housing reform is a complex process; it raises issues in finance, legislation, political, social and philanthropic attitudes, resource allocation, intergovernmental relations, professional and administrative practices and planning.[8] The interpretation by historians of the forces shaping housing reform inevitably varies.[9] There is debate, for example, over the reasons why municipal landlordism rose to prominence in the twentieth-century, whether because of the failure of the private housing market to meet the needs of the population, or whether because increasing intervention in the housing

market made private landlordism less profitable and therefore less viable as a means of housing the poor.[10] The divide over this issue tends to be a political one; from a left-wing perspective the private market is viewed with distaste, and collective state welfare is seen as the desirable way to meet social needs.[11] The reverse view is held by right-wing commentators. Robert Whelan, for example, in his recent work on Octavia Hill,[12] celebrates her achievements and those of the philanthropic housing movement in general, promotes the role of the private market and views 'social housing' as having been an avoidable disaster. However, some writers take a broader view. Pugh[13], for example, examines developments in other European countries and argues that while municipal housing was the outcome in this country, it was not the necessary one, and had philanthropic and co-operative housing schemes received more encouragement from the government, Britain might have developed a more mixed system of tenure.

Peter Kemp[14] has provided an overview of recent literature on the housing reform movement which charts a move from 'orthodox' accounts, such as Wohl's,[15] which concentrate on the role of public health reformers and the landmarks of Parliamentary Acts in the process, towards an approach which focuses more on the role of social forces and conflict, and the efforts of ordinary men and women.[16] Later accounts, Kemp says, have also moved away from a view which *assume* the introduction of state subsidies in housing, and seek rather to *explain* them.[17] It is not the intention of this chapter to enter these debates, but to map out the process of housing reform in order to set the context for the discussion of women's involvement in housing. I do not intend to attempt to detail the mass of housing legislation passed in the period, but to focus on certain broad themes: the effect of the processes of industrialisation and urbanisation on the living conditions of the poor, the remedies attempted in the shape

of sanitary reform, the model dwellings movement, legislation and the involvement of the middle classes in 'remoralising' work with the poor.

The question of housing reached crisis point in the 1880s and the political responses to this led to the appointment of the Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes (1884), an important turning point in governmental and public attitudes towards the issue of working-class housing. The evidence given to the Royal Commission revealed much about the conditions in which the poor were living and I have drawn extensively upon this. Among the secondary literature, the detailed work of Anthony Wohl and Gareth Stedman Jones on the housing problem in London, and the responses to it, has proved particularly useful.

The focus of this chapter will be upon London, not because housing reforms were not attempted outside the capital, but because this is where most of the literature is focused. London was not only the biggest city in Britain, but the biggest in the world, and the centre of the Empire. Paradoxically, in this, the richest and most powerful city in the world, large numbers of people could be found living in extremes of squalor and poverty and this incongruity necessarily attracted attention. The juxtoposition of the elegance of the West End with the sordidness of the East End exemplifed the gulf between the classes which was of so much concern in Victorian Britain.[18]

Those who were comfortably housed were in a minority. The working classes comprised eighty per cent or more of the occupied population in nineteenth century Britain,[19] and Rubenstein estimates that, of this group, perhaps only ten to fifteen per cent lived comfortably 'according to the standards of the time'[20] - which leaves 85% to 90% who did not. This huge group comprised many distinct strata within its ranks, with a prosperous and respectable artisan elite at the top, encompassing small shop-

keepers and skilled tradesmen and their families, through to semi-skilled workers, unskilled labourers, and at the bottom, people commonly referred to as the 'dangerous classes', the 'casual poor', the 'residuum'.[21] The composition of the working class altered over the period as the structure of the economy changed, but the hierarchical structure of it remained constant.[22]

It is also important to remember that the period under discussion, from the mid-nineteenth century to the First World War, was a long one in which social, economic and demographic changes took place, and that these were reflected in housing provision and policy. The shape of towns changed and suburbs came into being; trains, trams and motor transport were invented and this enabled people to live separately from their places of work. Standards of living and material expectations rose throughout the century and what would have been considered adequate housing at the beginning of the period, would not have been by the end.[23]

COUNTRY TO CITY - THE URBAN HOUSING PROBLEM

The roots of the housing problem can be traced to the processes of industrialisation and urbanisation which gathered force in the first half of the nineteenth century, creating an impoverished and ever-growing working population. Poor housing conditions were not new, nor were they unique to industrial towns. There are records of farm labourers at the end of the eighteenth century who lived with their families in one-roomed hovels, damp and below ground level.[24] What was new was the great numbers crammed into the growing industrial towns. Housing conditions may have been as bad in the villages, but the size of the problem was much worse in towns and the concentration of bad housing conditions encouraged the spread of disease. Moreover, as E P Thompson points out, conditions in towns were, and were felt to be, more actively offensive as there was no escape from the stench of industrial refuse

and open sewers.[25] As the new towns grew without the benefit of planning or adequate infrastructure, so the problems of water supply, sanitation and overcrowding worsened, until we arrive at the appalling conditions revealed by the housing and sanitary inquiries of the 1840s.[26]

Low incomes, periodic unemployment and an unregulated housing market all contributed to the housing problem, but perhaps the most important of these forces was the unremitting population pressure which accompanied industrialisation. The census of 1841 indicated a population growth of seventy six per cent in the United Kingdom in forty years.[27] This growth was concentrated in towns and between 1821 and 1831 the population of Manchester grew by 45%, Leeds by 47%, Sheffield and Birmingham by 40% and Bradford by 65%.[28] Over the course of the nineteenth century London's population grew from one million to seven milliion.[29] These figures were added to later in the century by the large numbers of Irish workers who came to the industrial towns in Britain following the potato famine of the 1840s and Eastern European Jews fleeing persecution in the 1880s. The extent of population movement is demonstrated by census figures which show that by mid century less than half the residents in most working-class areas of London were native-born Londoners.[30]

The demand for housing consequent upon urbanization was great and a considerable amount of house-building went on in response to this. The number of houses in London, for example, increased three fold between 1801 and 1851, but this failed to keep pace with the population.[31] One of the reasons why it was difficult to house the new town-dwellers decently was that the greatest need for accommodation was in those areas where the poor lived, in the centre of towns. Here, however, competition between industrial, commercial and residential use made land very expensive and the rents required to meet the investment for housing placed it out of the reach of the

poor. Furthermore, in order to build in city centres, the land had to be cleared of existing uses first and as no interim provision was made for the ejected inhabitants and rebuilding was slow, this response exacerbated the housing problem by making people homeless.

Building on the scale required to solve the housing problem would also have entailed considerable investment and co-ordination. However, since most landlords were small-scale owners of property, and generally did not own land, house-building was carried out by speculative builders with the intention of making a quick sale rather than of meeting housing need. London had no effective central government until 1888 when the London County Council was formed and in the absence of a central housing authority, or large corporate building companies, construction was carried out in a piece-meal way. There was no machinery, apart from that of the housing market, to match housing provision to housing need and without subsidy of either housing or rents, the poor were inevitably forced to crowd into the cheapest accommodation available. From the mid-century onwards hopes were placed on the developing suburbs and the provision of workmen's trains to deal with the problem, but the reality was that most of the poor who occupied the worst areas of housing were forced to live centrally as they had to be within walking distance of their work.[32]

The dominant form of urban housing tenure for all classes throughout the period was private renting[33] as it had been for centuries. The move to towns, however, entailed a very different relationship between tenant and landlord than that which had existed before. In the countryside much housing had been, and continued to be, tied to employment, particularly in farming and mining. Rented dwellings were generally let on yearly leases and many tenants had tenure rights that covered the span of their lives and recognised the succession rights of widows and children, and tenants could

only be shifted after lengthy legal process.[34] Legislation passed in the early nineteenth century progressively eroded these rights until a situation was reached in which, according to Nevitt, it 'would not be an exaggeration to say that as far as the law was concerned the mass of the population occupied their dwellings from 1838 to 1915 at the whim of their landlord'.[35]

While some factory and works owners built housing for their workers in the new industrial towns, many did not. Many of the new urban working classes were reduced to weekly tenancies in properties rented from unknown landlords. From a recognisable personal relationship in which both parties were known to each other, the business of house renting became a purely commercial one with urban landlords often operating through agents and never meeting their tenants.[36] It was also a much more transitory relationship than that which existed in the countryside, where landlord and employer were often one and the same, and acquaintance developed over life-times, if not generations. In the towns it was common for people to shift several times in the course of one year.[37] In both employment and housing the old forms of social relations were undermined, and the old structures of mutual responsibilities and obligations between landlord and tenant, employer and worker, were replaced by the impersonal cash nexus lamented by such writers as Thomas Carlyle.

This was a process which could also be cast as liberating as it freed workers from the surveillance and social control of their 'betters', but among the adverse effects which urbanization and its effects had upon women, this breakdown of traditional social structures was particularly detrimental. The transition from small familiar communities to the anonymomity of the city meant that, whereas in the village it was difficult for men to desert their families without attracting the condemnation of their neighbours and the disapproval of their employers, it was very much easier in the city. Desertion

left poor women in a desperate state financially as the wages they could earn were small and the outdoor relief they were awarded was, as the Poor Law Board Report of 1869 commented, 'deplorably low'.[38] The dire poverty in which many lone mothers lived is given vivid expression by the account of one of Charles Booth's investigators of the conditions he found in one home, 'the children are were often locked in during the day crying, perhaps, while the mother was out trying to earn bread for them. No fire, often no food, almost naked.....'[39]

Poverty was one of the root causes of the housing problem, affecting both men and women. William Morris wrote, 'let us on this matter be sure of one thing, as long as there are *poor* people they will be poorly housed'.[40] The poor could not afford the rents necessary to house themselves decently, especially in the central areas of towns, where they lived in order to be in proximity of their work. Many were reliant on casual or irregular employment, particularly in London,[41] irregular work meant that rent could not be paid on a regular basis and low wages meant that money could not be put by to tide them over the hard times. In the words of Stedman-Jones, the life of the poor in the nineteenth century consisted of 'the interminible struggle to get enough to eat, the precarious hold upon a marginal unemployment, the dreaded anticipation of hard winters, sickness and old age, the final and inevitable assumption into the workhouse'.[42] No statutory intervention was made to ease the problems of unemployment and hardship and the poor were left to the mercy of the market economy with no recourse in times of destitution but the workhouse or charity. The Victorian Poor Law, although designed to save people from absolute destitution, was incapable of coping with the disruption which the processes of industrialisation caused.

The predominant philosophy of laissez-faire, together with an inadequate understanding of the great changes which were taking place in society, meant that the structural causes of poverty were not recognised. In the face of the unprecedented wealth created by the new manufacturing industries it was difficult for the middle classes to believe that dire want and terrible squalor could continue to exist and the temptation to blame the poor for their poverty was very strong. They were designated as idle, feckless, improvident and dirty and the symptoms of their misery often mistaken for their causes. This attitude persisted throughout the nineteenth century and a report of 1881 said:

> There can be no doubt that the poverty of the working classes of England is due, not to their circumstances (which are more favourable than those of any other working population in Europe); but to their own improvident habits and thriftlessness. If they are ever to be more prosperous, it must be through self denial, temperance and forethought.[43]

The corollary of such attitudes in housing was that if the poor lived liked pigs in overcrowded sties this was the result of their swinish habits. They could be helped, cajoled, forced or educated into better ways, but the responsibility lay on them as individuals rather than in their circumstances or the environment in which they lived.

Such attitudes towards the urban poor were reinforced by the physical separation of working class from middle class areas in towns. The poor, needing to be near their work, were left to themselves, 'virtually segregated in their stinking enclaves', while the middle and upper classes moved to more salubrious parts of the town or out of the towns altogether.[44] The growing gulf between the classes was seen to be not only physical but moral, and there were worries about the concentration of the poor in the centre of large towns away from contact with the upper classes, the traditional force for social control and guidance.[45] A commentator wrote in 1842, 'the rich lose sight

of the poor or only recognise them when attention is forced to their existence as vagrants, mendicants or delinquents'.[46] Descriptions of investigations into the living conditions of the poor became expeditions into 'darkest England' or glimpses into the 'abyss'. The ignorance of large numbers of the upper and middle classes of the way that the poor lived is illustrated by the example which Henrietta Barnett gave of one lady who, after visiting Stepney, was astonished 'to find that the poor live in houses. She had expected that they abode, not exactly in tents, but in huts, old railway carriages, caravans or squatted against a wall.'[47]

HOUSING CONDITIONS OF THE POOR

As we have seen the working classes were a large and heterogenous group and the housing in which they lived reflected their income and status. The upper echelons of the working classes were able to afford small houses or sets of rooms which provided a modicum of comfort. Many, however, were not so fortunate. A great number were reduced to one-room living, and below this subsisted a stratum of the destitute who moved between workhouses, casual wards, common lodging houses, refuges and shelters, or the streets. According to one East Ender in the 1890s 'there were.....thousands of people in London who had never slept in a bed, who just crept into some filthy hole, where the police would not disturb them'.[48] Life for all members of the working classes was precarious; illness, unemployment or widowhood could strike, and people could find themselves dislodged from employment and housing and facing destitution in a matter of weeks.[49]

One-room dwelling was common in the central areas of towns, even for large families. The unregulated search for profit meant that properties originally intended for one family were sub-divided, until a situation was reached when a house built for one family had a number of different families in each of its rooms,[50] often with additional

lodgers. No additional services or facilities were provided to meet the needs of the tenants and this meant that a number of separate households shared the water supply and wc meant for one family. Cellar dwelling was also a feature of working-class housing and by the middle of the century the pressure of overcrowding drove thousands of 'troglodytes' and 'human moles' to live in underground cellar rooms.[51]

Overcrowding persisted and worsened throughout the century. Nationally, the person to house figures rose from 7.03 in 1801, to 7.72 in 1851, 7.85 in 1881 and in 1892 reached their peak at 8.02.[52] These figures are not necessarily accurate, and are likely to err on the minimum side, as much subletting went on which house-holders would have been reluctant to reveal to official inquiries.[53] Overcrowding was officially defined by the London County Council and the Registrar General to exist whenever there were more than two adults to a room.[54] This figure was often greatly exceeded and the 1891 census showed that 19.7 % of London's population lived in overcrowded conditions according to this definition.[55] In central areas this rose to 30% and sometimes 40%[56] Overcrowding also manifested itself in the concentration of the poor in particular areas of towns. The extent of the overcrowding in London is demonstrated by the fact that the area of the present borough of Tower Hamlets, which in 1971 had a population of 165,800, contained nearly 600,000 people in 1901.[57]

The effect of these conditions is demonstrated in the rising mortality rates of the middle years of the nineteenth century. Szreter has drawn together evidence which shows that, despite a rise in real wages from the eighteenth century, both life expectancy and average height attainment went down in the period from 1820s to 1860s.[58] It was in the growing provincial cities, where real wages had risen most and for the longest period of time, that mortality was highest and children the most underdeveloped. It appears that the health-threatening effects of overcrowding and insanitary conditions

overwhelmed the health benefits to be derived from higher wages and greater food consumption. Slum dwellers lived shortened and literally stunted lives.

RESPONSES

The housing problems which emerged in the early nineteenth century cannot be attributed to any one factor. The unprecedented rate of population growth and its concentration in industrial areas would have created major problems in any society, most of all, as Thompson says, in a society whose rationale was profit seeking and hostility to planning.[59]

The housing conditions which ensued were indeed appalling and they evoked a range of responses from contemporaries. At one end of the spectrum was denial, a disbelief that such dire need could exist in a rapidly growing economy. Indifference was another response, or a hope that the policy of laissez-faire would lead to a natural working out of the problem. There was also disgust and condemnation - disgust at what were disgusting living conditions, and condemnation of those who lived in such squalor - allied to a certain fascination with the way that the poor lived. Fear also played a part, fear of disease, crime, social unrest and of the contamination of the respectable labouring classes by the 'dangerous classes'. To the middle classes the preservation of family life and decent morals were of prime importance; they were fearful of the breakdown of family life and the sexual promiscuity that poor and overcrowded housing conditions seemed to imply.[60]

Economic interests were also threatened; capital required not only a healthy and productive workforce but also the conditions for the reproduction of labour and these were clearly lacking in the housing of the poor. There was also humanitarian concern for the suffering of those living in such conditions, anger at their exploiters and guilt

at the neglect of the working classes. Charles Kingsley in a sermon in the 1850s, demanded:

> How dare you, in the face of that Baptismal sign of the sprinkled water, keep God's children exposed to filth, brutality and temptation, which festers in your courts and alleys, making cleanliness impossible - drunkenness all but excusable - prostitution all but natural - self-respect and decency unknown?[61]

These varying responses to the housing problem, and the philosophy underlying them, although not easy to separate, led to different sorts of solutions. Sanitary reformers concentrated on questions of sewage, drainage and water supply, philanthropists provided improved or model dwellings for the poor in an attempt to ameliorate the worst excesses of the market system, paternalistic employers built model villages for their workers, and concerned members of the middle classes attempted to reform the morals of the poor to make them thrifty, cleanly and self-sufficient.

THE PUBLIC HEALTH MOVEMENT

By the 1840s poor housing conditions were causing such a threat to public health that action became imperative. Cholera and typhoid appeared for the first time in Britain in the nineteenth century, and can be directly attributed to the poor sanitation which led to the contamination of water supplies. Those most affected were the poor, but while members of the upper classes could stay out of working class areas, they could not avoid the infections which originated and thrived in poor housing conditions. There were major outbreaks of cholera in 1832, 1847, 1848-49, 1853-54 and again in 1866 which swept through the industrial towns killing 140,000 people in England, Wales and Scotland.[62] The health reformer, Dr Southwood Smith, commenting on these epidemics and their causes said:

> These miseries will continue until the Government will pass measures which shall remove the sources of poison and disease from these places.....These poor

> people are victims that are sacrificed. The effect is the same as if twenty or thirty thousand of them were annually taken out of their wretched homes and put to death; the only difference being that they are left in them to die.[63]

Current theories of disease attributed fever to noxious gases and effluvia emanating from decomposing faecal matter (pythogenic) which although mistaken, focused attention on drains and sewers. The early public health reformers, therefore, concentrated on building efficient town sewage systems and connecting houses to sewers.

The names of Edwin Chadwick, Lord Shaftesbury and Dr Southwood Smith are those most closely associated with the movement for public health in this period. All three were members of the Public Health Board which administered the Public Health Act of 1848, Britain's first major national policy initiative dealing with cholera and typhoid. They were influenced by the ideas of Jeremy Bentham, the founder of the Utiliarian movement, and the sanitary reforms they promoted reflected this approach to the overall good of society. Public health was indivisible and therefore health reforms should be taken in the name of all, and at the expense of all.

However, there was much resistance to their ideas as sanitary reforms necessarily impinged upon the private realm of the home, and also cost money. It was argued that to enact public health reforms would interfere with the workings of the free market and inevitably raise rents and rates. Landlords were often also members of the local vestries, the bodies in London charged with sanitary improvements, and they were resistant to change on three counts: to insist upon house improvements would cost them money as property owners, to enforce environmental improvements would cost them money as rate payers, and to carry through these measures might cost them votes as elected members. There was also opposition to sanitary improvements from

the working classes who faced higher rents or eviction if their landlords carried these improvements out.[64] The movement for sanitary reform was thus caught between the desire to abate the danger of disease and a reluctance to depart from the politics of laissez-faire, and in the early Victorian period the legislation passed was permissive rather than mandatory. Writing of the fall of the Public Health Board in 1853, *The Times* commented, 'Esculapius and Chiron in the form of Mr Chadwick and Dr Southward Smith have been deposed and we prefer to take our chance of cholera and the rest than be bullied into health'.[65]

Nevertheless, by the 1860s it was beginning to be recognised that germs spread disease, and that this was exacerbated by poor housing and sanitation. This provided an even sounder argument for collective and preventive health measures which would justify state intervention, albeit in a limited way. From the mid-century onwards the scope of housing and public health legislation was expanded to include measures to deal with overcrowding and slum-dwellings, medical officers of health were appointed in local authorities which enabled the control and inspection of houses, and, where appropriate, the demolition of insanitary houses. Over forty major acts dealing with public health and housing were passed between 1850 and 1880,[66] but the sheer size of the problem and the permissive nature of the legislation passed meant that reform was slow and could be resisted by local authorities and landlords if they chose. The culminating government Act of the early public health movement was the Public Health Act of 1875 which consolidated much of the legislation of the previous half century. In this sense it did little that was new, but it did go further than the existing legislation in granting powers to local authorities to make model bye-laws governing the design of housing, thus laying down standards for house-building for the first time.[67]

Women were very active in the public health movement. Although they could take no direct part in the processes of legislation and could not frame or enforce sanitary measures, they were important agents in the propagation of sanitary knowledge. Middle-class women visited the homes of the poor in a voluntary capacity as district visitors for the parish and they had direct knowledge of the insanitary conditions of working class homes. As the supposed repositories of domestic expertise, these lady visitors advised working-class women on standards of house-keeping and child-care. In 1859 the Association of Ladies to help Sanitary Reform was founded in London, and at the inaugural meeting Charles Kingsley addressed the audience in the following terms:

> There isn't a woman in this room who couldn't save the lives of four or five children within the next six months; and this without giving up one of your daily duties, one of your pleasures, one even of your frivolities, if you choose.[68]

The rather frightening responsibility imposed here was taken very seriously and a number of ladies' sanitary associations were set up which made it their special mission to visit the homes of the poor and impress upon working-class wives and mothers the importance of hygiene in their homes (thus laying the foundations for health-visiting[69]). Women, therefore, had a very direct role in sanitary reform and perhaps a more influential one than the male medical officers and legislators as they were able to change day-to-day practices in the home. As concern grew over infant mortality later in the period and eugenic fears of 'the deterioration of the race' came to the fore, women's role became even more important in imparting domestic and child-care skills to the supposedly ignorant mothers of the working classes.

Government attention was mostly focused on destruction rather than construction and while this resulted in the clearance of some of the worst areas of slum housing, it also

resulted in more overcrowding and in homelessness. As the inhabitants of the areas to be cleared were not rehoused, merely evicted, and rebuilding was very slow, they moved into nearby districts, thus making overcrowding worse, and in the meantime increasing destitution. Lord Shaftesbury, describing the consternation caused by such eviction, said that those affected were like 'people in a besieged town, running to and fro, and not knowing where to turn'.[70]

To carry out such a policy of wholesale demolition without provision for rehousing is a reflection of the dismissive attitude towards the poor which prevailed at the time, but there was also a belief that such forcible shaking up was healthy in that it had a 'levelling-up' effect:

> The effect of demolition is that the population of the area which has attracted all the worst elements is dispersed into the surrounding neighbourhood, and when the new buildings are completed, they attract all the best elements of the surrounding population, so that a circulation and rearrangement of the population takes place[71]

This was written as late as 1901 and shows not only a lack of understanding of the process, but a convenient reversal of the usual 'contamination' theory. It also disregarded the real human misery involved in constant enforced movement.

THE MODEL DWELLINGS MOVEMENT

Among the new buildings for which demolition was carried out were those provided by the model or improved dwellings companies. These semi-philanthropic companies and trusts which originated in the 1840s were aimed at providing decent and affordable accommodation to working people, at the same time as yielding a limited profit of five per cent to investors. A number of prominent individuals such as Lord Shaftesbury, Dr Southwood Smith, Disraeli, and Baroness Burdett-Coutts were pioneers of the movement and it was hoped that once it had been shown that healthy working class

housing could be organised on the basis of limited profit, others would be attracted to investment in philanthropic housing. They were initially successful and over thirty model dwelling companies were operating in London in the second half of the nineteenth century,[72] including the famous Peabody Trust.

The provision of model dwellings on the principle of five per cent philanthropy enabled investors to be charitable within the framework of the market, combining two seemingly irreconciliable tenets of Victorian ideology - laissez-faire and the duty of Christian charity. Wohl points out that before the advent of progressive taxation and the welfare state, the monied classes had no other means than charity to redistribute their wealth, but, he argues, it was as much self-interest and a desire to maintain the fabric of their class and the capitalist system which motivated them, as humanitarian impulses.[73] Investment in housing was one way of avoiding the necessity of paying higher wages, and it was in the employers' interests to maintain a healthy workforce. The concentration of the poor in supervised buildings may also have had some attractions to those fearful of the disorderly lower classes.

Initially the model dwellings movement thrived and Pugh[74] attributes its success to four factors - to access to finance from benefactors and share-holders attracted to good causes, to land made available by aristocratic landowners and the Metropolitan Board of Works, (the body responsible for housing in London from 1855-88), to low interest long term loans from the Public Works Commissioners and to the general public and political support it enjoyed. The assistance received from the government in the shape of loans was notable in an age which turned its face against the idea of state intervention in the market, and Cowley calls these loans 'a 'hidden form of state subsidy'.[75]

However, the spiralling cost of land and building in central London meant that higher rents had to be charged in order to cover these rising costs at the same time as maintaining dividends. The problem was summed up by one of Charles Booth's collaborators who said:

> Good accommodation, if supplied on ordinary business principles is too dear to those on or below the "line of poverty".... The result is that with few exceptions it may be said that it is only in the worst blocks that the poor are accommodated and the question of "how is this to be avoided" has still to find an answer.[76]

Critics claimed that the companies rarely housed the really needy, but concentrated attention on those in regular employment and thus provided unfair competion with private landlords. The rents were usually beyond the reach of the very poor, and with the exception of the Peabody Trust and a few other companies, they mostly housed the artisan class and above. Records show that in the 1880s they attracted more curates and policemen than unskilled labourers.[77] The strict regulations which obtained in most of the buildings also militated against the very poor. A reference was generally required from employers, rent had to be paid in advance and no arrears were allowed, all of which made payment difficult for those who were seasonally or casually employed. Certain activities were forbidden, such as the taking-in of washing, and this effectively ruled out a substantial proportion of the very poor, particularly women - widows, deserted wives, poor mothers of large families - who earned a small living in this way.[78]

Paradoxically, the model dwelling companies also made large numbers of people homeless. The areas of land on which they were built had first to be cleared of existing housing, the original occupants were displaced and were rarely rehoused in the new buildings. The Artisans aand Labourers' Dwelling Improvement Act of 1875, which gave the Metropolitan Board powers of purchase over slum areas, to clear them

and sell the land to builders of improved dwellings, resulted in the displacement of 22,868 persons in central London. In almost all cases clearance amounted to eviction.[79] One poor woman told an East End clergyman:

> I came to London twenty five years ago and I have never lived in a room more than two years yet: they always say that they want to pull the house down to build new dwellings for poor people, but I've never got into one yet.[80]

The blocks of model dwellings were also much criticised for their ugliness and lack of homeliness. The *Daily Telegraph* in 1868 described the typical model dwelling style as 'a cross between the reformatory and the workhouse',[81] and William Morris condemned them as 'bare, sunless and grim bastilles'.[82] The difficulty of providing social buildings at very low cost and still obtaining steady returns on capital could only be avoided by building very basic accommodation. The East End Dwellings Company founded by Samuel and Henrietta Barnett in 1884 attempted to do this. Their first scheme, Katherine Buildings in Stepney, was composed mainly of single rooms with few facilities, let initially at the cheap rate of one shilling and sixpence to two shillings a week.[83] Beatrice Webb, who managed Katherine Buildings for a time, said that 'all amenity, some would say all decency, was sacrificed to the two requirements of relatively low rents and physically sanitary buildings'.[84]

The movement cannot be called a failure. For those they did house, the blocks offered a higher standard of living than did the commercial housing market, and put decent housing within reach of a proportion of the working classes. However, it was not possible to build on the scale necessary to meet the housing need. In the 1860s the population of London increased on average by 45,000 per annum, yet by 1873 only 27,000 people were housed in model dwellings.[85] New trusts continued to be established and by 1914 model dwelling companies were housing about 100,000

families in London.[86] This was a substantial contribution, but post the First World War the development of municipal housing, residualised the role of the voluntary sector in housing, and their successors, housing associations, took on the role of 'special needs' housing providers.

Women, with the exception of wealthy individuals, such as the philanthropist, Angela Burdett Coutts,[87] could not be involved in the model dwellings movement as builders or financiers on any great scale, but their presence was felt in the buildings in their customary role as visitors to the poor. The work of Octavia Hill and her fellow housing workers can be seen as having its origins in the model dwellings movement, and indeed Octavia Hill described her first housing scheme in Marylebone in 1864 as 'a small model dwelling'.[88] It formed part of the movement of members of the middle classes to reach out across the class gulf to the poor, to help them materially and to 'remoralise' them.

REMORALISING THE POOR

Octavia Hill's new system of housing management, together with the settlement movement and the Charity Organization Society, can all be seen as part of the movement to remoralise the poor which gathered force in mid-Victorian Britain. Stedman Jones characterises those involved as a new 'urban squirearchy' in that they intended to take up a position of leadership in the community and provide new forms of guidance for the poor.[89] The idea for settlements originated with Edward Denison who, in 1869, went to live in the East End and inspired others to follow his example.[90] Men and women from the middle and upper classes came to live in the settlements and thus lived out the ideal of bringing the classes closer together. They were attached to universities, colleges and schools and operated in working-class areas with the aim of bringing the benefits of culture, education and wholesome

entertainment to the poor. Toynbee Hall in Whitechapel, probably the most well-known of the settlements, was founded in 1883 by Samuel and Henrietta Barnett and by 1914 there were over twenty university settlements in London.[91] The exclusion of women from universities, meant that most of the settlements were male, but in 1889 the Women's University Settlement (WUS) was set up by members of the early women's colleges at Oxford and Cambridge. Octavia Hill was a member of the Executive Committee of the WUS and housing management work formed part of the early settlers' training.[92]

The Charity Organization Society was formed in 1869 in order to co-ordinate the relief work of the Poor Law with that of the multitude of charities which existed in London. Its aim was to prevent 'clever paupers' from manipulating the system and obtaining relief from a number of sources, and through the judicious application of charitable funds to encourage the honest poor into 'sturdy independence'.[93] In the course of their work COS visitors, who were for the most part women, went into the homes of the poor and saw at first hand the problem of insanitary conditions, overcrowding and high rents. In 1873 the COS set up a committee to enquire into the housing problem of the working classes. The report which the committee produced formed the basis of the 1875 Artizans' Dwellings Act. Octavia Hill, who was a founder member of the COS, was also a member of this committee and brought to bear the experience she had gained in her innovative schemes for housing the poor.

All of these movements shared a great belief in the power of individual influence and were concerned with improving the poor through the agency of personal relationships. Women were perceived to have a special role here. Lord Shaftesbury said of sanitary improvements, that the legislative and theoretical work was to be done by men, the minute and practical work by ladies,[94] and a COS guide to visitors of 1882 dropped

the male pronoun altogether and used 'she' when referring to visitors.[95] Despite the philanthropic efforts of the middle classes, however, the housing problem continued to worsen and by the 1880s had reached crisis point.

THE HOUSING CRISIS OF THE 1880s

The question of housing moved centre stage in the early 1880s; there were two major government inquiries into housing, the Parliamentary Select Committee on Artizans' and Labourers' Dwellings in 1882-83 and the Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes in 1884-85, and two leading political figures, Lord Salisbury, the leader of the Conservative Party and Joseph Chamberlain, the leader of the Radicals, took up the issue of housing. Several factors contributed to the new prominence of housing. It was becoming evident that the public health reforms passed had been ineffectual in meeting the needs of the growing urban population. Overcrowding, exacerbated by the various clearance schemes[96], was growing worse, the prolonged agricultural depression of the late nineteenth century meant unemployment and increased rural depopulation to the cities, and in London there was also an influx of East European Jews fleeing from pogroms and persecution in their own countries. This all increased the pressure on housing and inevitably led to an increase in rents. At a time when wages were very low and competition for jobs meant that they could be forced lower, this meant considerable hardship. Alfred Marshall, the economist wrote in 1884, 'the employer pays his rent out of his savings in wages; and they [the employees] have to pay their high rents out of their diminished wages'.[97]

The result was that many artisans were reduced to one-room living and forced to cohabit with the casual poor and criminal classes in undesirable areas, and it was this, according to Stedman-Jones, rather than the fact of overcrowding itself which caused such social anxiety in the 1880s.[98] These fears were fed by the journalism and

pamphleteering on working class housing which grew in the early 1880s, much of it focused on the East End. This was not new; from the early 1840s there had been a steady stream of writing on the living conditions of the poor, some serious and sober accounts such as the reports of public health inquiries and medical officers, some more emotive such as descriptions given by novelists, but there had also been a strand of lurid and sensational writing which served to feed middle class fears of the criminal abodes of London.[99] What was new was the concerted interest shown by several major London newpapers and the seriousness with which they began to take up the cause of working class housing. In June 1883 the first instalment of a series of articles by the popular journalist George Sims appeared in *The Pictorial Record* under the heading 'How the poor live'. The *Daily News* started two regular columns, 'Homes of the London poor' and 'Evenings with the London poor', besides a regular correspondence page dedicated to housing matters. Other newspapers followed suit and there was much reporting on dismal conditions and criminal dens. The *Pall Mall Gazette*, talked of 'pestiliential rookeries where it is a matter of physical impossibility to live a human life', and commented that 'many are lucky enough to die'.[100]

In the autumn of 1883 a small anonymous pamphlet appeared which added to the sense of crisis over the conditions of the poor. *The Bitter cry of outcast London*[101] caused a sensation, primarily because of its emphasis on the connections between overcrowding and sexual immorality. The author of the pamphlet, the Reverend Andrew Mearns, was the Secretary of the London Congregational Union, and his primary purpose in writing the pamphlet was to draw attention to the mass abandonment of the Church, and by the Church, of the urban poor, but it was his descriptions of the abysmal living conditions and vice-ridden lives of the poor which drew attention. Mearns was the first writer to actually name incest as one of the consequences of one-room living, and in so doing he broke a very strong taboo -

incest was so unmentionable, or inconceivable, that it was not made illegal until 1908. Mearns also considered that one of the effects of terrible homes was to drive young women into prostitution. 'Who can wonder', he wrote, 'that young girls wander off into a life of immorality, which promises release from such conditions?'[102] The pamphlet concluded that Christian missions could achieve little until the housing problem was solved and called upon the government to intervene:

> The State must make short work of this iniquitous traffic and secure for the poorest the rights of citizenship; the right to live in something better than fever dens; the right to live as something better than the uncleanest of brute beasts.'[103]

Elizabeth Wilson points out that incest and promiscuous sexuality were perceived as the bestial results of the frightful conditions which reduced the workers to the condition of animals. It was not usually understood as the result of co-ercion and violence by men, but simply a manifestation of the animality of the working class of both sexes.[104] No analysis was made of the power relations involved and there was little recognition of the extent to which women and girls were the victims of sexual abuse. That abuse was ocurring on a large scale is corroborated by the records of the first Salvation Army refuges opened in the late 1880s for homeless women which showed that four in ten of the young women who came to them were fleeing from sexual abuse in their own homes.[105]

The direct connection made between overcrowding and sexual immorality in *The Bitter Cry* shocked the nation and compelled action. The Queen was said to be 'deeply moved' by Mearns' revelations and wrote to Gladstone asking him what steps he intended to take.[106] 'Home' and its moral influence was one of the cornerstones of Victorian life and the idea that this was overturned in the homes of the poor, so that they became forces for the bad rather than the good, was both shocking and

distressing. *The Times*, the *Quarterly Review*, *Punch* and the *Illustrated London News* all demanded an official public enquiry, a meeting was held to discuss the findings of *The Bitter Cry* and the Queen was petitioned for a Royal Commission. William Stead, the editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, gave much coverage to the pamphlet and he said later that its publication 'caused the appointment of the Royal Commission of the Housing of the Poor, from which modern social legislation may almost be said to date.'[107]

The pamphlet also fuelled anxieties about the separation of the classes and a sense of guilt and shame manifested itself in renewed middle class activities among the poor. Beatrice Webb described the period as one which witnessed 'a new consciousness of sin amongst men of intellect and men of property'.[108] New impetus was given to the settlement movement and this period also marked the entry of the Salvation Army, closely followed by the Anglican Church Army, into shelter and rescue work with the poor. The Church began to take an interest at a high level in the question of housing and several Church conferences were called specifically to discuss the implications of *The Bitter Cry*. The Lord Mayor's Mansion House Council on the Dwellings of the Poor, which was established in London in 1883, had the Archbishop of Canterbury, the bishops of London and Stepney, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Westminster and the Chief Rabbi as members.

Moral anxiety was matched by political fears in the early 1880s. It was feared that, not only might the poor rise up and attack property, but that concessions might be made which would lead to the socialization of housing provision. Joseph Chamberlain, the leader of the Radicals, in an influential article in the *Fortnightly Review*, quoted the words of Danton, 'If you suffer the poor to grow up as animals they may chance to become wild beasts and rend you.'[109] This would not be the first time that there had

been fears that the British poor might follow the lead of their French counterparts, and the recent example of the Paris commune undoubtedly caused much anxiety among the propertied classes in London.

Fears of a British revolution were not realised, but the working classes were becoming more organized. Trade unionism was growing[110] and new socialist organizations were being formed. The Marxist Social Democratic Federation was set up in 1881 and the Fabian Society in 1884, and in the same year the Third Reform Act enfranchised a larger working class electorate. This led to a new response from the the Conservatives and more traditional housing reformers in order to save the housing problem from socialistic solutions. Richard Cross, Lord Shaftesbury and Octavia Hill all argued against municipal or state provision of housing for the poor, and in 1882 the Liberty and Property Defence League was founded with the aim of opposing the entry of government into housing construction. Their arguments centred around the loss of independence and individual self-help which such schemes would involve and Lord Shaftesbury called any such proposals a 'legal pauperization'.[111] Richard Cross wrote that what was wanted was not radical change, but, 'patience, perserverance, determination, charity and private enterprise'.[112]

Some Tories advocated a more radical approach and Lord Salisbury wrote an article in 1883 in the *National Review* in which he proposed a mixed private and public solution to the problem in the shape of very low cost government loans to model dwelling companies. This was the first detailed interest in housing shown by any party leader and Salisbury began to emerge in the mid 1880s as the leading Parliamentary spokesman on housing. In 1884 he proposed that a Royal Commission on the housing of the working classes be appointed. When he rose to address the House on this issue he made a significant speech in which he noted the inefficacy of previous legislative

attempts to deal with the housing problem, and highlighted the question of overcrowding as the 'great and peculiar evil'.[113]

THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON THE HOUSING OF THE WORKING CLASSES

The Royal Commission took as its brief the investigation of the dwellings of the working classes with 'special reference to overcrowding'.[114] It looked at the whole of England and Wales, taking evidence on both rural and urban areas, but its greatest concentration was on London, and especially certain parishes in central London. Evidence was heard from one hundred and eighteen witnesses ranging from local government officials, medical officers, clergymen, school-board visitors, the managers of model-dwellings and building societies and 'persons whose experience had been acquired in philanthropic work'.[115] Octavia Hill and Lord Shaftesbury were among the principal witnesses called. On the Commission were fourteen members including one earl, two lords, two baronets, a Roman Catholic cardinal-archbishop, an Anglican suffragan bishop and eight MPs. The Prince of Wales also attended some of the sessions which shows the seriousness with which the issue was being treated. There were no working class members of the Commission and no women. Working class men were called to give evidence on behalf of Trades Councils, but out of the one hundred and eighteen witnesses only two women were called, Octavia Hill and a Mrs Sarah Bates, a School Board visitor in Clerkenwell. Working class women had no route through which they could be represented.

The Commission looked at matters of sanitation, the availability of accommodation, rents, building costs, vestry activities, model dwellings, leases and the cost of living, but its focus throughout was on overcrowding. Much of the Commission's time was spent discussing the connections between overcrowding and immorality of various kinds. Lord Shaftesbury in his evidence said:

> The effect of the one-room system is physically and morally beyond all description. In the first place, the one-room system always leads as far as I have seen to the one-bed system. If you go into these single rooms you may sometimes find two beds, but you will generally find one bed occupied by the whole family, in many cases consisting of father, mother and son; or of father and daughters; or brothers and sisters. It is impossible to say how fatal the result of that is.[116]

There was much talk of prostitution, both of the way in which overcrowding predisposed girls towards it and of how the lack of affordable housing forced the respectable poor to live among brothels. George Sims in his evidence said that in the Mint and Southwark districts of London 'prostitution is carried on in the same houses in which tolerably respectable people of the working classes live so that their children are aware of it'.[117] Lt Col MacLiver, chairman of the Special Committee of Inquiry on Overcrowding among the Poor in Bristol, said 'we think that overcrowding must have been one of the great causes of that [increase in juvenile prostitution] because they are accustomed to see acts more or less of indecency and grow up so that, so to speak, they have no virtue to lose'.[118] Some of the witnesses admitted that sheer poverty drove women to prostitution and the Medical Officer for Exeter, Dr John Woodman, talked of mill girls in his area who eked out their living through prostitution.[119]

The evidence to the Commission revealed much about the general conditions of life for the poor in the 1880s and until Charles Booth's survey of the next decade it was the most exhaustive account of working class domestic conditions. It was filtered through the eyes of middle class witnesses, but there are few authentic working class accounts of this period and some of the evidence given to the Commission paints a

very graphic and moving picture of the life of the poor. The Commission heard evidence on overcrowding and sanitary conditions which gave examples of people living thirty or forty to a house with sometimes only one privy for the whole street.[120] What this actually meant for the people living there was that 'the WC in these houses frequently gets stopped up and you have everything running down the stairs'.[121] We are also told that as there were no separate WCs for men and women and that 'no decent woman could go into such a place while a man was using the next compartment'.[122] There was also evidence that 'females can never use these places at all',[123] so quite where women did go is a bit of a mystery.

Another of the grim realities of working-class life, particularly for women, was the nature of some of the work which was carried out at home. One of the local clergy witnesses on being questioned on the earnings of women and children said, 'Yes, they earn money from occupations carried on at home; and that is one of the great evils of the overcrowding, that the people not only live in the rooms and sleep in the rooms, but carry on a trade which is obnoxious to health'.[124] The real obnoxiousness of this becomes apparent when one learns than among the trades carried on at home, often in one room, were rabbit-pulling, rag-picking and haddock-curing.[125]

Many people did not even have a home and the vicar of St Paul's, Clerkenwell testified that boys and girls were often found sleeping out in all sorts of places as 'if they have not enough to pay for a night's lodgings, they must go under a railway arch, or into a water closet or into a dustbin, under waggons or carts'.[126] Sims, the journalist, gave evidence that 'staircases and passages at night are liable to be crowded by persons who, having no other place of shelter, come here to sleep'.[127]

The Commission also heard evidence on the condition of the poorest section of the working class - women. The Reverend George Smith, vicar of St Pauls, Finsbury, speaking of the difficulties faced by the poor in paying rent, gave a description of the plight of one of his women parishioners:

> GS: I have a woman in my parish, a widow with one child, whose earnings I have gone into very carefully since last November, and I have just got her a room in Peabody Buildings. During the month of November she earned on average 3s and 3d per week, during the month of December she earned on average 2s 6d per week and during the month of January she earned 2s 9d per week.
>
> Commissioner: And out of this she paid for her lodging and supported herself and her child?
>
> GS: She did.
>
> Comm: This is suffering more acute than any to which men are exposed?
>
> GS: A great deal more. I do not know how she lived.[128]

This was not an extreme or excessive case, said the witness, but an average one.[129]

The Commission presented its report in May 1885. In considering its findings it concluded that the main problem was not sanitation, but overcrowding, 'the central evil around which most of the others group themselves',[130] and it attributed overcrowding to high rents and the necessity for so many of the working classes to live near their work. It also heard evidence that model dwellings had failed to provide sufficient housing in the central districts and that working class suburbs were not yet a viable option. The Commission's conclusions were that the answer lay in more efficient administration of existing laws rather than in any drastic new legislation. Little mention was made of the need for extensive rehousing of the poor and there was anxiety not to imply any state reponsibility for housing. The Housing of the Working Classes Act

of 1885 which resulted from the Royal Commission did, however, give municipal authorities the power not only to clear slum housing but to rebuild, and lowered the interest on loans from the Public Works Loan Commission.[131] It also equipped London with a strong elected central authority, the London County Council.

There is disagreement over the outcome of the Royal Commission. Stedman-Jones says that it represented a triumph for the conservative opinion which favoured voluntarism, and produced no radical solutions.[132] Wohl, however, states that the Act, in its acknowledgement of the principle that local government could become involved in the construction of working-class housing, marks the vital transition from essentially negative to positive legislation. Pugh argues that the Act did little that was new and sees the legislation resulting from the Royal Commission as a lost opportunity.[133] The model dwelling companies, which had had forty years experience in redevelopment could, he says, have been transformed into something more democratic and representative, and Octavia Hill's schemes had shown that rehabilitation and careful management could succeed in housing the poorest section of the working classes. The co-operative movement had also shown its viability and if public policy had turned in these directions and made finance and cheap land available, the movement might have flourished. None of these solutions was fully exploited and the road which British housing policy took led to the domination of public housing.

THE MOVE TOWARDS PUBLIC HOUSING

The Royal Commission did, however, mark a significant turning point in the history of housing reform. It indicated that the housing question had become politicised and from now on governments would have to give a higher priority to the housing of the working classes. Attention began to be directed towards the causes of housing distress; the market was shown to have failed in meeting the needs of the poor and the inability of even the regularly employed members of the working classes to afford the rent necessary to house themselves decently revealed the extent of poverty. Change was not immediate, but the acknowledgement of the 1885 Act that the displaced poor had the right to rehousing and that government had a role in this, marked a new phase in housing reform which looked towards the municipal provision of housing. In the years leading up to the First World War legislation was passed which increasingly gave local authorities not just powers but duties to enforce sanitary laws and undertake slum clearance. They were also given loans to acquire land and build dwellings on favourable terms from central government. The change in housing policy was the result of a number of factors and reflected wider changes in social and political thought about the organization of society.

The greater awareness of the relationship between the housing problem and poverty was in marked contrast to former years. Poverty began to be seen as being at the root of the housing crisis and the findings of Charles Booth in the 1890s helped to demonstrate that it was unemployment, irregular work and family circumstances, rather than bad habits which caused chronic poverty.[134] New thought began to be given to the question of the relationship between the individual and society, and the idea that the private sphere of home and family should not be invaded by public institutions was no longer so firmly held. The basic tenets of Liberalism, Utilitarianism and laissez-faire were beginning to be modified in the second half of the nineteenth century. Influential

thinkers such as John Stuart Mill and T H Green[135] argued that certain social goods, such as education, the relief of poverty and municipal utilities were so important that the state should intervene where the market would discourage, in order to maintain a humane and civilised society.

These changes in thought had far-reaching implications and they affected housing as they did other areas of social and economic policy. Against this background the working classes were gaining more power, both electorally and through the organized labour movement. The Independent Labour Party was formed in 1893 and the new local government structure set up in 1888 meant that members of the working classes could make their views known through the ballot box. The Fabian Society was active in promoting collectivism as the most effective way of achieving social reforms and did much in housing as in other fields, to make municipal socialism an acceptable policy. As Pugh puts it, by the 1890s:

> The working class had voting power, local government had housing powers, the Fabians provided the social and economic theory which articulated the case for the welfare state and the intellectual leaders in London and the leaders of the artisans in the northern industrial towns were committed to public housing.[136]

A further prompt to government action was the Trafalgar Square riot of 1887 which panicked propertied London and focused attention on making concessions to the working classes.

Concern was also being felt over the physical health of the poor themselves and in the 1890s the public health movement began to turn its attention towards the 'deterioration of the race', and measures to halt this. Alarm was caused by the poor physical state of the Boer War recruits,[137] and there were also fears of the growing industrial competition from Germany and the USA. This led to Darwinian-type theories of the

survival of the fittest applied to nations, and the individuals which made them up, which further eroded the principle of non-intervention into private life. The debate on national efficiency formed the immediate background to the Liberal Government's health and welfare reforms in the Edwardian period, and the beginnings of the British welfare state. Between 1906 and 1914 Liberal governments introduced legislation establishing limited forms of health insurance, unemployment insurance, old age pensions, school meals and school medical inspections. For the first time, according to Clarke, the working class were seen as a national resource.[138] Conseqently the health and physique of children required state intervention and clearly decent home conditions formed a part of this.

The London County Council pioneered many new housing developments, both building blocks of council flats in central London and estates in the suburbs, and setting high standards of design and construction. Inevitably this meant that these developments were only affordable by the more affluent members of the working classes and the question of the housing of the poorest remained unanswered. Overcrowding remained a significant problem in central London and in 1911 over 758,000, more than the entire population of Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham, were living in overcrowded conditions,[139] and much work-class housing was still in a deplorable state.[140]

By the outbreak of the First World War council housing was a small part of housing provision, providing for no more than one per cent of the population,[141] but the ground had been laid for its expansion after the War. The demand for 'homes fit for heroes' reflected a real revulsion against the appalling housing conditions which the poor had endured, and a determination not to return to them. Government now provided subsidies rather than loans, local authorities were charged with establishing the extent of housing need in their areas and drawing up plans to meet it, and there

was a Ministry of Housing and a national housing policy. This is not to say that housing problems disappeared, but the principle of government responsibility had been accepted.

CONCLUSIONS

The housing problem faced by the Victorians was immense. As Pugh points out Britain was the first country to face such problems on such a scale, there was no experience to draw upon and solutions were posed in the face of crisis. The processes of industrialisation and urbanization created large numbers of impoverished people, competing for housing in a market which was not attuned to provision on a mass scale. Laissez-faire ideology - although weakening over the period - could not accommodate the idea of government intervention to secure social goods, the working classes were not yet sufficiently organized to bargain for an improvement in their living conditions and it was left to reformers and philanthropists to fight for better housing conditions for the poor.

The issue of public health, which first drew attention to the housing problem, was marked by the Utilitarian ideas of Edwin Chadwick. His emphasis on sanitary engineering as a way to improve the health of towns, did much to demonstrate that where the health of the whole population was concerned, government did have a responsibility, at the least to remove health-threatening nuisances in housing.

Concern with the threat to public health posed by poor housing conditions was also mixed with anxieties about the increasing separation of the classes. The work of model dwelling companies, of Octavia Hill, the settlement movement and the Charity Organizaton Society, were all, to some degree, a product of concern over the abandonment of the poor by their social superiors. This expression of conscience was not unmixed with fears of the possible threat to property interests presented by the

'dangerous classes'. Great attention was focused on the apparent godlessness, immorality and criminality of the poor. These traits were perceived as the cause of poverty, rather than as their consequence, and the emphasis on individual responsibility for destitution made it difficult for reformers to see poverty as an unavoidable condition for the mass of the labouring classes.

The predominant Liberal political ideology also made it difficult for Parliament to countenance more than negative and permissive legislation in housing. The local vestries, who were charged with implementing the legislation, were unlikely to damage their own interests as property owners, or to risk raising rates to pay for housing improvements. Great hopes were placed in the philanthropic housing schemes to provide housing for the poor, without either government intervention or interference with the workings of the housing market, but market forces prevented them from operating on the large scale necessary to meet the need.

None of the legislation or schemes tried out from the 1840s to the 80s was able to meet the housing needs of the growing numbers of the poor and by the time of the appointment of the Royal Commission in 1884, their failure to do so was evident. Attention had turned to the question of overcrowding and the immorality it supposedly caused. The middle class public was scandalised and shamed by the revelations of *The Bitter Cry*, and for the first time housing became a serious political issue taken up by such prominent figures as Salisbury and Chamberlain. Government now had to face the problem of how the poor were to be decently housed and the growing power of the working classes through political represention and trade union organization made action more imperative. The next thirty years saw the acknowledgement that, not only did the poor displaced by clearance schemes have the right to be rehoused, but that new housing should be provided for them, which local authorities should build and

central government should finance. This radical change was acompanied by new perceptions in social policy in other spheres and the realisation that, as structural causes lay behind many of the problems of society, *ad hoc* solutions were not enough.

This outline of the history of housing reform highlights actions taken in the public sphere of politics and philanthropy. Those, however, most adversely affected by housing conditions, were also those least well placed to campaign about them. There was a working-class self-help movement, but participation in this was generally limited to the better-off portion of the working classes and this excluded women. For women there were no Parliamentary voting rights and, outside the mill towns of the north, little trade union representation. There were no official channels through which women's voices could be heard and, unlike working-class men, they represented little threat of rioting or damaging property interests, and little attention was paid to them.

As we have seen, women's sufferings were in several ways more acute than men's; they were poorer, the work which women did to supplement the family income had to be such that it could be combined with home duties, and this often involved casual charring or laundry work, or taking in home-work of the most unpleasant kind. Women on their own with children to support were in a particularly difficult situation. Where the housing conditions of women did catch public attention was in relation to the revelations of the 1880s about the connections between overcrowding, sexual promiscuity and incest. But while there was some sympathy for their plight, concern was focused on the brutalising effect of overcrowded living conditions rather than on the fact that it was women who were victims. The social purity movement of the 1860s and onwards did concern itself with the protection of young women, and middle and upper-class women, as we shall see in chapter 6, were very active in this.

Women activists were involved in the housing reform movement. They were not able to act in the political sphere and were generally unable to command the funds to endow housing schemes on any scale. They were, however, very active in the interstices of philanthropy and the public health movement and were the agents of change in the daily lived experience of the poor. The visiting activities of middle class women in their various guises as district visitors, sanitary visitors, COS members or housing managers made a huge contribution to the minutiae of housing reform. While male politicians and reformers were generally concerned with schemes of drains, clearance and construction, women were generally more concerned with the interiors of people's homes and the lives that were lived in them. This is not to say that these activities reflected essential female characteristics, but that women operated in the spheres that were open to them. The work of Octavia Hill, the subject of the next chapter, is notable in that she both crossed supposedly male and female spheres, and made a pioneering contribution to the process of housing reform by working with sections of the urban poor previously considered unmanagable and undeserving of decent housing.

NOTES

1. George R Sims, 'The dark side of life' from How the poor live, *Pictorial World*, 1883 in Peter Keating, (ed.), Into unknown England, 1866-1913: selections from the social explorers, Fontana, 1976, p.69

2. Henry Mayhew, London Labour and the London Poor, the *Morning Chronicle*, 1849-50

3. Charles Booth, Life and labour of the people of London, 3rd edition, Macmillan, 1902-3 17 volumes

4. Chief among these were the Select Committee on Artizans and Labourers' Dwellings Improvements, (1881-82), and the Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes, (1884-85)

5. In the 1880s the *Pall Mall Gazette*, under the editorship of W T Stead, was particularly prominent in this field; the *Pictorial Record* carried a series of articles, 'How the poor live', by George Sims and the *Daily News* had two regular columns, 'Homes of the London' and 'Evenings with the London poor', besides a regular correspondence page

dedicated to housing matters. (See A Wohl, The eternal slum: housing and social policy in Victorian London, Edward Arnold, 1977, p.201)

6. David Rubenstein, Victorian homes, David & Charles, 1974, p.15

7. See, for example, A Wohl, The eternal slum: housing and social policy in Victorian London, Edward Arnold; 1977, Enid Gauldie, Cruel habitations: a history of working class housing, 1780-1918, George Allen & Unwin, 1974; S Lowe and D Hughes (eds.), A new century of social housing, Leicester University Press, 1991; S D Chapman, (ed.), The history of working class housing: a symposium, David & Charles, 1971; M J Daunton, House and home in the Victorian city: working class housing, 1850-1914, Edward Arnold, 1983; C Pugh, Housing in capitalist societies, Gower, 1980; John Burnett, A social history of housing, 1815-1970, David & Charles (Holdings) Ltd., 1978

8. C Pugh, Housing in capitalist societies, Gower, 1980, p.1

9. Three main approaches can be identified, broadly conforming to individualist, pluralist or structuralist perspectives. Individualist explanations focus on 'great individuals', both in terms of their role in diagnosing problems and in bringing about solutions, (see, for example, W T Hill's biography Octavia Hill: a pioneer of the National Trust and housing reformer, Hutchinsons, 1956); pluralist explanations explain historical change in terms of the interplay of interests in society which, at specific turning points, produce particular outcomes, (see, for example, A Wohl, The eternal slum: housing and social policy in Victorian London, Edward Arnold, 1977), and structuralist explanations are based on the patterns of distribution of wealth and income in society, and focus on the role of the state in supporting capitalist accumulation and on class conflict (see, for example, J Cowley, Housing for people or for profit?, Stage 1, 1979)

10. See discussion of this issue in Peter Kemp, 'From solution to problem? Council housing and the development of a national housing policy', in S Lowe and D Hughes, (eds.), A new century of social housing, Leicester University Press, 1991

11. In this context M J Daunton points out that 'much historical work on housing is ...more indicative of the policy consensus of the 1960s than of the past',(A property owning democracy? Faber, 1987, p.41)

12. Robert Whelan, (ed.), Octavia Hill and the social housing debate: essays and letters by Octavia Hill, Institute of Economic Affairs Health and Welfare Unit, 1998

13. C Pugh, opus cited.

14. Peter Kemp, 'From solution to problem? Council housing and the development of a national housing policy', in S Lowe and D Hughes, (eds.), A new century of social housing, Leicester University Press, 1991

15. A Wohl, The eternal slum: housing and social policy in Victorian London, Edward Arnold, 1977

16. See, for example, J Melly, (ed.), Housing, social policy and the state, Croom Helm, 1979, cited in P Kemp, op.cit., p.46

17. See, for example, M J Daunton, (1987), cited in P Kemp, op.cit., p.46

18. G Stedman Jones, op.cit., p.10

19. M Rose, 'Victorian society: the emergence of urban Britain', in The Cambridge historical encyclopaedia of Great Britain and Ireland, Cambridge University Press, 1985, p.280

20. D Rubenstein, op.cit., p.15

21. G Stedman-Jones, op.cit., p.10

23. See Robert Roberts account of his Edwardian childhood in the slums of Salford which gives a vivid account of the gradations of working class society at the time: 'socially the unskilled workers and their families, who made up about fifty per cent of the population in our industrial cities, varied as much from the manual elite as did people in middle station from the aristocracy'. (Robert Roberts, The classic slum: Salford life in the first quarter of the century, Penguin Books, 1974, p.17)

23. Enid Gauldie states that at the beginning of the nineteenth century, 'a 'decent' house might very well be one that claimed no more than to be weather-proof, ceilinged and floored, and to have right of access to some outside source of water. By mid-century 'decent' would mean large enough for unmarried grown-up members of the family to have separate sleeping accommodation.....as well as being served by adequate drainage and a regular water supply. An indoor lavatory did not become a necessity or even an expected part of a decent house for working people until the twentieth century'. (E Gauldie, Cruel habitations: a history of working class housing, 1780-1918, George Allen and Unwin, 1974, introduction)

24. E P Thompson, The making of the English working class, Pelican Books, 1970, p.352

25. Ibid

26. Ibid, p.352. The inquiries included the Report of the Select Committee on the Health of Towns, (1840), Chadwick's report on the Sanitary Conditions of the Labouring Population, (1842), Report of the Royal Commission on the Sanitary State of Large Towns and Populous Districts, (1844)

27. A Murie, Housing inequality and deprivation, Heinemann Educational Books, 1983, p.23

28. Michael Rose, op.cit., p.277

29. C Pugh, op.cit., p.150

30. A Wohl, op.cit., p.2

31. Ibid

32. Evidence given in 1877 to the Lords Committee on the Metropolitan Streets Improvement Bill, pointed out that 'it was not only the heads of families who worked, but also the children who lived with their parents, widows, also often supporting their children by daily work; and that the position of the home should be such that all should come home if possible for their dinner. (Anon, Work around the Five Dials, Macmillan & Co., 1878, pp.49-50)

33. 95% of households were rented until after the Second World War, (David Coleman and John Salt, The British population: patterns, trends and processes, Oxford University Press, 1992, p.58)

34. A A Nevitt, 'The nature of rent-controlling legislation in the UK', Environment and Planning A 2, (1970), pp.127-36, cited in Kemp and Williams, op.cit., p.123

35. Ibid

36. See evidence on 'middlemen' given to the Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes, 1884-85, C.4402 I, Volume II, para.5092, p.167

37. Lord Shaftesbury commented in his evidence to the Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes, 'I suppose that there would be from 60,000 to 70,000 people in London who seldom remain three months in any one place.....they are merely wanderers upon the face of the earth'. (RCHWC, Vol.I, Report, p.15)

38. Poor Law Board Report 1869, cited in A Wohl, op.cit., p.254

39. A Fried and R Elman, (eds.), Charles Booth's London: selections from Life and labour, Penguin Books, 1971, p.132

40. William Morris, 'The housing of the poor', in *Justice*, 19 July 1884 reprinted in Social Democrat, September 1889, Vol.III, No IX, p.278

41. See G Stedman-Jones, op.cit., for an extensive discussion of the situation of the casually employed in London in the last century

42. G Stedman-Jones, op.cit., p.342

43. Charity Organization Society, 1881, quoted in Open University, Social problems and social welfare, Block 3, Unit 13, Open University Press, 1994, p.20

44. E P Thompson, op.cit., p.355

45. A Fried and R Elman, (eds.), op.cit., Introduction

46. G C Holland, The vital statistics of Sheffield, 1843, p.51, quoted in E P Thompson, op.cit., p.356

47. Henrietta Barnett, 'Passionless reformers', in the *Fortnightly Review*, XXXII (August 1882), p.226, quoted in A Wohl, op.cit., p.69

48. Quoted in Fishman, 1975, p.235 in Open University, extract from Open University, Social problems and social welfare, p.52, (further provenance unknown)

49. The medical officer for Hampstead argued that at the root of the housing problem was the overwhelming fact that London was inhabited by people just one or two weeks away from starvation. (A Wohl, 'The housing of the working classes in London 1815-1914', in S D Chapman, (ed.), The history of working class housing: a symposium, David & Charles, 1971, p.24

50. M J Daunton, House and home in the Victorian City: working class housing 1850-1914, Edward Arnold, 1983, p.29

51. A Wohl, op.cit.,p.3

52. A Wohl, 'The housing of the working classes in London 1815-1914', in S D Chapman (ed.), The history of working class housing: a symposium, David & Charles, 1971, p.24

53. Ibid

54. A Wohl, 1977, p.xv

55. G Stedman-Jones, op.cit., p.218

56. Ibid, pp.218-9

57. Open University, extract from Social problems and social welfare, p.53, (further provenance unknown)

58. Simon Szreter, 'Mortality and public health 1815-1914', in ReFresh, Spring 1992, No.14, pp.1-4

59. E P Thompson, op.cit., p.356

60. S Watson & H Austerberry, Housing and homelessness: a feminist perspective, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986, p.27

61. Quoted by Larry Elliot in, 'In place of ethical socialism', in The Guardian, 13 January 1996

62. Michael Rose, op.cit., p.278

63. Quoted in Gillian Darley, Octavia Hill: a life, Constable, 1990, pp.36-7

64. See A Wohl, 1971, p.23

65. Gillian Darley, op.cit., p.39

66. A Wohl, 1977, p.73

67. See Patrick Nuttgens, The home front: housing the people 1840-1990, BBC Books, 1989, pp.48-50, for a discussion of the provisions of the Public Health Act

68. Letter from Octavia Hill to her sister Miranda, 24 July 1859, in C E Maurice, (ed.), Life of Octavia Hill as told by her letters, Macmillan & Co., 1913

69. The origins of health visiting can be traced back to the work of the early Ladies' Sanitary societies, and in particular to the Manchester Ladies' Sanitary Reform Society, founded in 1861, which in 1862 began to employ working-class women to undertake visiting under the supervision of lady volunteers. (Open University, Social problems and social welfare, Block 2, Unit 11, Open University Press, 1994, p.53)

70. Quoted in Helen Bosanquet, Social work in London, 1869-1912, Harvester Press Ltd., 1973, p.171

71. Ibid, p.199

72. A Wohl, 1977, p.146

73. Ibid, p.141

74. C Pugh, op.cit., p.150

75. J Cowley, Housing for people or for profit? Stage 1, 1979, p.50

76. Arkell, Life and Labour of the people of London, III, Blocks of buildings, pt.1, pp.28-29, quoted in A Wohl, 1977, p.170

77. G Stedman-Jones, op cit, p.185

78. Ibid, p.184

79. Ibid, p.202

80. A Wohl, 1977, p.19

81. *The Daily Telegraph*, 24 December 1868, quoted in A Wohl, 1977, p.166

82. William Morris, The housing of the poor, *Justice*, 19 July 1884, reprinted in Social Democrat, September 1899, Vol.III, No.IX, p.278

83. A Wohl, 1977, p.169

84. Beatrice Webb, My apprenticeship, 1926, pp.254-5, quoted in A Wohl, 1977, p.170

85. G Stedman-Jones, op cit, p.197

86. C Pugh, op cit, p.150

87. See Edna Healey, Lady unknown: the life of Angela Burdett-Coutts, Sidgewick & Jackson, 1978

88. Letter from Octavia Hill to Mrs Shaen, 19 April 1864, in C E Maurice, (ed.), Life of Octavia Hill as told in her letters, Macmillan & Co., 1913, p.212

89. G Stedman Jones, op.cit., p.259

90. Mrs S A Barnett, 'The beginnings of Toynbee Hall', in Practicable socialism, by Canon Barnett and Mrs Barnett, Longmans, Green & Co., 1915

91. Helen Bosanquet, op.cit., p.76

92. For an account of the work of the Women' University Settlement see A L Hodson, Letters from a settlement, Edward Arnold, 1909

93. Open University, Social problems and social welfare, Block 3, Unit 13, Open University Press, 1994, p.15

94. Octavia Hill to Miranda Hill, 24 July 1859, in C E Maurice, op.cit., p.148

95. F Prochaska, Women and philanthropy in 19th century England, Oxford University Press, 1980, p.110

96. The Torrens Act of 1868 gave local authorities powers to demolish individual insanitary houses, and the Cross Act of 1875 extended these powers to large areas. In addition there were also large scale clearances of inner-city land for railways, warehouses, urban improvements schemes, etc.

97. Quoted in G Stedman-Jones, op cit, p.217

98. G Stedman-Jones, op cit, p.219

99. See, for example, Thomas Beames, The rookeries of London, 1850, James Ritchie, The night side of London, 1857, James Greenwood, Seven curses of London, 1869

100. The *Pall Mall Gazette*, 16 October 1883, quoted in A Wohl, (ed.), The bitter cry of outcast London by Andrew Mearns, Leicester University Press, 1970, p.82

101. Andrew Mearns, The bitter cry of outcast London, 1883

102. Andrew Mearns, The bitter cry of outcast London, edited by A Wohl, op.cit., p.61

103. Ibid, p.69

104. Elizabeth Wilson, The sphinx in the city: urban life, the control of disorder and women, Virago, 1991, p.35

105. Mandina Hendessi, 4 in 10: Report on young women who become homeless as a result of sexual abuse, CHAR, 1992

106. A Wohl, (ed.),The bitter cry of outcast London, by Andrew Mearns, Leicester University Press, 1970, p.32

107. Ibid, p.33

108. Beatrice Webb, My apprenticeship, Longmans Green & Co., 1926, pp.173-4, quoted in A Fried and R Elman, Charles Booth's London, Penguin Books, 1971, p.17

109. A Wohl, (ed.), 1970, p.28

110. Trade union membership rose from 750,000 to nearly 1,500,000 in the 1880s, A Fried and R Elman, op.cit., p.xv

111. A Wohl, 1977, p.231

112. Gareth Stedman Jones, op.cit., p.228

113. A Wohl, (ed.), 1970, p.33

114. RCHWC, Vol I, Report, 1885, p.6

115. Ibid

116. Ibid, p.13

117. RCHWC, Vol.II, Minutes of evidence, para 5622, p.183

118. Ibid, para 7245, p.236

119. Ibid, para 8542, p.276

120. RCHWC, Vol.I, Report, p.11

121. RCHWC, Vol II, Minutes of evidence, para 5118, p.168

122. Ibid, para 2913, p.190

123. Ibid

124. Ibid, para.5046, p.165

125. RCHWC, Vol.I, Report, p.11

126. RCHWC, Vol.II, Minutes of evidence, para.5116, p.168

127. RCHWH, Vol.I, Report, p.9

128. RCHWC, Vol.II, Minutes of evidence, paras.3738-40, pp.122-3

129. Ibid, para.3741, p.123

130. RCHWC, Report, p.11

131. A Wohl, 1977, p.248

132. G Stedman-Jones, op.cit., p.229

133. C Pugh, op.cit., p.153

134. Booth's exhaustive study found that 30.7% of all people in London lived on or below the poverty line, with the proportion in poverty in the East End nearer 35%, with a third in this group in acute poverty. The cause of poverty in about 85% of cases was either 'employment', (both lack of work and low wages), or 'circumstances' (large families and illness), and 'habit' ('idleness, drunkeness, thriftfulness') accounted for only about 15% (A Fried and R Elman, Charles Booth's London, Penguin Books Ltd., 1971, p.30)

135. See C Pugh, op.cit., p.23

136. Ibid, p.161

137. See the Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Physical Deterioration, (1904)

138. Open University, Social problems and social welfare, Block 2, Unit 11, Open University Press, 1994, p.43

139. A Wohl, 1977, p.301

140. See Maud Pember Reeves, Round about a pound a week, Virago, 1988, p.28

141. S D Chapman, 1971, p.11

Chapter 4

OCTAVIA HILL

'Before anyone takes that upon himself let him remember - first it is a home, not a collection of rooms he has to regulate, it is a number of human beings he has to support, not machines or cattle'.
(Octavia Hill 1857[1])

Octavia Hill is undoubtedly the most well-known of women housing reformers, and indeed she is the only women to be mentioned at all in most histories of the housing movement. She was one of the outstanding figures of Victorian social reform and although her fame has faded today, she was a household name in her own lifetime and her influence spread well into the twentieth century. In 1942, Sir Reginald Rowe, President of the National Federation of Housing Societies, said of her, 'I doubt if in the field of human service there has ever been any other woman who has sown seeds from which so much has grown and is still growing'.[2] This was written thirty years after Octavia Hill's death and reflects the standing in which she was held by her immediate successors. Her reputation was derived primarily from her work in the field of working-class housing (and from her role in the establishment of the National Trust), but she also played a prominent part in other movements of the time and achieved the status of a national expert on social issues. Octavia was a remarkable woman who made her reputation on the strength of her work and as such she was one of a group of Victorian women who forged careers in the public world and showed by their example that women could successfully step out of their traditional role. She is a significant figure in both the early women's movement and the housing reform movement and this chapter will assess her contribution in both fields.

Octavia Hill's work in housing began in 1864 when she took over the management of three rundown houses near her home in Marylebone. From these small beginnings her project grew to encompass housing schemes throughout London. Although she never worked outside the capital herself, she inspired many imitators and by the end of her life there were housing schemes operating the 'Octavia Hill system' in provincial towns throughout Britain and also in Europe and North America. What was distinctive about her methods of housing management was the care she expended on the tenants, as well as buildings, and her insistence that the personal and intensive nature of the work meant that it could only be done effectively by women. Indeed, she created the profession of housing management for women, something which was of great significance to her contribution to the women's movement as it helped pave the way for middle-class women to move into the public world of paid employment.

However, what is also noteworthy about this achievement is that she established, and justified, housing management as a female profession by appealing to traditional ideas about women's private and domestic role, thus in many ways reinforcing the doctrine of separate spheres. Her own life, by contrast, was lived in opposition to this ideology, and by her example she showed that women could succeed, and excel, in the public sphere. This apparently contradictory stance was only one of the many paradoxes in the life and work of this complex figure. She came from a Christian Socialist background and condemned 'capitalist landlords', but was adamantly opposed to the social ownership of housing; she supported women's rights to education and employment, yet set her face resolutely against the idea of women's suffrage. It is not possible to ignore these paradoxes and one of the questions which the following chapter will consider is the extent to which the apparent contradictions between her public utterances and her actions reflected the difficulties Victorian woman experienced in moving into a male-dominated world.

Much has been written about Octavia and, as we shall see, her reputation in housing is a contested one. Wohl, for example, claims that she was 'grotesquely out of touch with the realities of working-class housing needs'[3] and Stedman Jones that she failed to grasp 'the structural nature of poverty as the root of the housing problem'.[4] Where I intend to enter the debate is by reassessing both the scale of her work in housing and the extent of her influence, as I think these have been seriously under-estimated in most recent housing histories. The first section of this chapter, therefore, will deal with Octavia's work in housing, and will trace the development of the housing schemes under her control in London and the spread of her methods both in this country and abroad. The extent of her housing operations has not been systematically quantified before and this will I hope provide a useful addition to the historiography. The particular contribution she made in developing new methods of management for working-class dwellings will be explored, together with the way in which it fitted into current thought about housing and the home. The reasons behind her success will also be examined. The second section will consider Octavia's place in the women's movement, focusing upon her creation of housing management as a career for women, and some of the ideological conflicts within this, and aspects of the way in which she worked with women which can be described as 'feminist'. She recruited and trained a great many workers over her life-time, and among her fellow workers were some remarkable women. They have mostly been overshadowed by Octavia, and little has been written about them previously. In setting Octavia in the context of her contemporaries, I hope to go some way towards recognising their achievements.

SOURCES

Octavia both wrote, and was written about, extensively, and her life is very well documented.[5] The primary sources I have drawn upon are Octavia's published articles and essays, her annual *Letter to Fellow Workers*,[6] the transcript of her evidence to

the Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes (1885) and the two volumes of her letters which were published after her death. The first of these appeared in 1913. It was edited by her brother-in-law, C E Maurice,[7] and contains a selection of her correspondence from the early 1860s to her death in 1912, linked by a chronological narrative. We know that Maurice made a selection of the letters and that a number have been edited out,[8] so we have very much the version of Octavia's life which her family wished perpetuated. Most of the letters used in the C E Maurice collection were subsequently destroyed, so this remains the major source for biographers.[9] In 1928 her sister, Emily Maurice, produced a collection of letters, similarly edited, covering the earlier period of her life, from the 1850s to the 1870s.[10] Octavia left no autobiography, memoirs or diary, but these two volumes can almost stand in their place. They contain letters between Octavia and her sisters, mother, friends and colleagues from her teenage years to her death at the age of seventy four, which give a very detailed account, not only of her various projects, but also of her private thoughts and feelings. Various of Octavia's contemporaries left accounts of her and her work in memoirs and autobiographies and I have also drawn upon these.[11]

A number of biographies have been written of Octavia. The first one was written in 1942 by E Moberley Bell[12] to mark the thirtieth anniversary of her death. This was undertaken at the request of Octavia's surviving relatives in order to give 'some more complete presentation of her personality and some estimate of her contribution to the national life'.[13] Moberley Bell took the route of compiling extracts from Octavia's letters and linking them with a narrative which, while not being entirely uncritical, celebrates Octavia as a leading woman social reformer and a great figure of the Victorian age. In 1954 William Thomas Hill, a distant relative of Octavia's, wrote a biography which lauded her achievements as a pioneer of the open spaces movement, housing reform, social work and housing work, and put her on a par with Florence

Nightingale as one of the outstanding women of the nineteenth century.[14] The next major biography of Octavia, by Gillian Darley[15], did not appear until 1990 when the space of time and distance from Octavia's family allowed a more critical reappraisal. This gives a very detailed and comprehensive account of Octavia's life and a wealth of information on her housing work, her other fields of activity and her various friends, colleagues and benefactors. It also presents a rather more critical assessment of Octavia's politics than the earlier biographies in that it draws attention to the conservative strands in her social philosophy and to the way in which, towards the end of her life, she became increasingly at odds with the more progressive trends of social reform.

There is thus a clear trend in the writing on Octavia which moves from earlier adulatory descriptions of her work and achievements to more critical reappraisals. This is not surprising; many great figures of the Victorian era have been subject to similar re-evaluation by later commentators, but what is notable is that there is a distinct gender bias to be detected in more recent writings on Octavia, particularly about her work in housing. Male housing historians, with some exceptions, have tended to see her work as a diversion in the progress towards municipal housing,[16] whereas female housing historians have taken a more positive view of Octavia's work, stressing her innovative approach and the way that some of her methods are being rediscovered by housing practitioners today.[17] Marion Brion,[18] in her recent work on women in housing management, has reviewed the historiography on Octavia and addressed the question of why male historians have tended to be so hostile to her. The answer, she concludes, lies in the political views of most housing historians and their ambivalence towards powerful women. Most writers in housing history, she says, have a left-wing perspective which leads them to be critical of people such as Octavia Hill, whom they

see as holding up progress towards state intervention in housing.[19] According to Brion the attacks on her are the more acrimonious because she was a woman: 'as a successful "governing woman" she is open to the ambivalence which men feel about strong women without all the "disguise" which is wrapped around Florence Nightingale'. This seems a convincing analysis and goes some way towards accounting for the controversy which surrounds Octavia's reputation. I would further suggest that the male antipathy towards Octavia may have something to do with the fact that men have successfully taken over housing management as a profession in this century and there is possibly some male unease about the fact that it was a woman who established the profession. Housing management, as Dale and Foster point out, more than any other welfare state profession, 'possessed the characteristics of being initiated by a woman, being promoted as a woman's profession, embodying feminine characteristics and being eventually eclipsed by the development of a masculine orientation'.[20]

Octavia's sphere of work was wide and this is reflected in the range of literature in which she appears. Apart from her work in housing and the National Trust, she has been described as 'founder of the Army Cadets, campaigner for recreational open spaces, pioneer of social case work, precursor of Town Planning and pioneer of the Settlement Movement'.[21] She was particularly prominent in environmental causes and has been credited with coining the term 'green belt'.[22] However, the other major context in which Octavia Hill is discussed is that of the early women's movement. She is mentioned in many accounts of nineteenth century women's history, but three writers have concentrated on her in more depth. Nancy Boyd[23] has examined her life, along with Florence Nightingale and Josephine Butler, as three pioneering women who were motivated in their work by their religious beliefs. Jane Lewis[24] and Juliet Parker[25]

have both written about Octavia Hill in their anthologies of women active in social reform in the period. Importantly, they view her life in the round, rather than only in the light of her housing work, and place her in the context of the early women's movement, and the particular forces to which these women pioneers were subject in making their way in the public world.

OCTAVIA'S HOUSING CAREER

The range of literature about Octavia reflects the wide scope of her activities, but it is housing in which she made her reputation, and in this section I shall outline the development of her work from its beginnings in Marylebone in 1864, to the time of her death in 1912, by which time she was managing housing schemes all over London. The focus will be on London, as this was Octavia's seat of operations, but the expansion of work inspired by her in the provinces and overseas will also be charted in order to provide an estimate of the extent of her activities and influence.

It was John Ruskin, the art critic and philosopher, who launched Octavia in her housing career. Octavia first met Ruskin in the early 1850s when he came to visit the Ladies' Guild, a Christian Socialist venture in London aimed at providing work for poor women. Octavia's mother, Caroline Hill, was manager of the Guild and Octavia, then in her early teens, worked there as superintendent of a class of poor children toymakers. Ruskin offered to train her as an art student and she spent over ten years as his pupil. They developed a close relationship and Octavia was deeply influenced by his ideas, not only on art, but on society, politics and the environment.[26] When, in 1864, Ruskin's father died leaving him a considerable fortune, he discussed with Octavia how he should use this money and she suggested investing in a housing

project for the poor which she should run; 'a small private model lodging-house', she said, 'where I may know everyone and do something towards making their lives healthier and happier'.[27] Ruskin bought the lease of three rundown houses in Paradise Place for her to manage. Octavia was to rehabilitate the houses and to run them on humane lines while returning a small amount of interest on the investment, five per cent compared to the ten per cent usually earned in the commercial housing sector. They were both determined to prove that working-class housing could be run decently and still return a profit, and hoped that by their example other landlords would be persuaded to take up their methods.

Octavia described these beginnings at Paradise Place in an article which appeared in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1866:

> The place swarmed with vermin: the papers, black with dirt, hung in long strips from the wall: the drains were stopped, the water supply out of order. All these things were put in order, but no new appliances of any kind were added, as we had determined that our new tenants should wait for these until they had proved themselves capable of taking care of them.[28]

The methods which Octavia used in this, her first venture in housing management, were to set the tone for all her subseqent housing projects. She would take over rundown courts, and work with the tenants to gradually improve their standards of housekeeping. She would put the houses into basic sanitary order and then offer further improvements as an incentive to, and reward for, cleanliness and regular payment of rent. She insisted on sound commercial principles in her dealings with her tenants because she believed that they ought to be able to pay their way, in order that they could feel a 'dignified independence....in the sense that they are really paying for their own home'.[29]

Octavia was successful in this first venture and the following year Ruskin bought the lease of Freshwater Place, a nearby court of five houses, for her to manage. Some of the homes, she said 'were reported unfit for human habitation.....the rest are inhabited by a desperate and forlorn sort of people, wild, dirty, violent and ignorant as ever I have seen'.[30] She was horrified at the state of the children, 'their eyes all enflamed with continuing dirt, their bare feet, their wild cries, their disordered hair, and clothes looking as if dogs had torn them all round, and carried off great jagged pieces'.[31] Octavia was working with people who were in extreme housing and social need, and while she was always at pains in her writings to point out that some succeeded against almost insurmountable odds in maintaining a decent 'home', it is clear that many fell into the category of what were known as the 'destructive classes'. 'I have never found anything which they could not destroy', she said, 'drains will get stopped up and taps will be wrenched off, and balister rails burnt'.[32] Model dwelling companies, in her opinion, were unable to deal with such tenants because they needed, what the societies could not offer, 'some individual power and watchfulness'.[33] She did not discount the contribution of the model dwelling companies, nor the pressing need for large scale new building, but aimed at helping a more needy section of the working classes than they housed.[34] The individual nature of the relationship which existed between the lady housing workers and the tenants was the hallmark of her system and she devised methods of management which were very different from what had gone before.

THE OCTAVIA HILL SYSTEM

What was different about Octavia's methods of housing management, and what made her so effective in working with the poorest tenants was that she believed in rehabilitation - of both buildings and tenants. Up to this point the management of

working-class housing in the commercial sector had consisted of rent collection, repairs and eviction, and in the model dwellings sector, of the provision and maintenance of subsidised housing to those tenants who could afford the rent and be trusted not to abuse the facilities. Octavia's work in housing can be seen as growing out of the model dwellings movement, but where she went further was that she charged cheaper rents,[35] thus placing her rooms within the reach of the very poor, and that she retained among her tenants members of the 'destructive classes' who were often displaced by slum clearance. Model dwelling companies, as we have seen, focused on clearance and rebuilding, and in the process made many of the original inhabitants homeless. Writing of her work in Barrett's Court, her third scheme, Octavia said, 'if we had rebuilt, we must have turned them [the existing tenants] out in favour of a higher class, thus compelling them to crowd in courts as bad as Barrett's Court itself was when we bought it'.[36] Thousands upon thousands of people were made homeless in London as a result of clearance schemes, and Octavia did not add to their numbers. She also tolerated single room dwelling in her schemes as the alternative would have been homelessness for the families inhabiting them.[37]

She made her schemes work because she saw clearly that effective housing management could not be based upon the bricks and mortar alone, but also required care for the tenants. 'You cannot deal with the people and their houses separately', she said, 'the principle on which the whole work rests, is that the inhabitants and their surroundings must be improved together'.[38] And it is here that she made her special mark - she created a system of housing management which rested upon the gradual improvement of both tenants and housing and strove to create cohesive communities of responsible, rent-paying tenants. The regular payment of rent and the maintenance of good standards of housekeeping were rewarded by material improvements to her

tenants' homes, but over and above this, a whole design for living was incorporated into Octavia's housing schemes.

At Barrett's Court, for example, a scheme which she took over in 1869, she and her workers ran a penny-bank for tenants, a Sunday School for their children, an Institute for Women and Girls, a Working Men's club, a night school for boys, a Friday Mission Service and a Co-operative shop. Lectures, plays, dances and musical entertainments were put on regularly and there were outings to the South Kensington Museum, Hampton Court, the Zoological Garden and Hampstead Heath. Tenants were encouraged to set up clubs, choirs, drama groups and gardening competitions and Octavia enrolled her friends to help run them. In addition to 'improving' and recreational activities, she also provided her own employment schemes offering maintenance and cleaning work around the courts for out-of-work tenants.

In many ways then, Octavia operated as community worker, social worker and youth worker as well as a housing manager and her aim was to build communities rather than to house the maximum number of people. Her attention to the details of people's lives must have made her schemes much more pleasant and human places to live than the large and impersonal blocks of the model dwelling companies. She gave thought to what it meant to live in close proximity with other people and arranged her tenants, so as to save them 'from neighbours which would render their lives miserable'.[39] This did not mean eviction, but 'not two bad people side by side....not a terribly bad person beside a respectable one'.[40] She also gave special thought to the needs of her women tenants and provided drying areas for washing and playgrounds for the children, and made the innovation of employing play workers to supervise them. Apparently simple touches, such as the bringing up of bunches of

flowers from the countryside for her tenants, demonstrate the care she took over every aspect of their lives.[41]

One of the guiding principles of Octavia's work was that it was done on a personal basis and that her tenants were individually known. 'For firstly my people are numbered', she said, 'not merely counted, but known, man, woman and child[42].....Think of what this mere fact of being known is to the poor'.[43] What we do not know is what the tenants thought of it all, whether they welcomed, tolerated or resented the attentions of the lady rent-collectors. It was surveillance, whether kindly meant or not, and the power relationship was very unequal, in that the tenants could be evicted. She was aware of the power she exercised over people's lives. 'It is a tremendous despotism', she wrote, 'but it is exercised with a view of bringing out the powers of the people and treating them as responsible for themselves, within its limits'.[44]

A striking feature of her work is that in an era when almost every philanthropic effort was imbued with religiosity, Octavia firmly set her face against forcing her own, deeply felt, religious views on her tenants. Mrs Maclagan, one of the workers at Barrett's Court, said that the workers were not allowed to say prayers or read the Bible at the night school or Sunday class 'lest the susceptibilities of the Roman Catholic tenants or their priests should be wounded'.[45] Neither did Octavia make any regulations about temperance, 'I do not say that I will not have drunkards', she said, 'I have quantities of drunkards; but everything depends upon whether I think the drunkard will be better for being sent away or not'.[46] Nor did she preach to her tenants over their sexual morals and was surprisingly tolerant over these matters. She said that she felt it her duty to evict those 'who led clearly immoral lives',[47] by which she presumably

meant prostitutes, but otherwise there is no comment in her writings on the marital arrangements of her tenants. Given that there was much discussion in the Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes on the sexual immorality which arose from overcrowded housing, it is significant that Octavia, one of the leading figures of the housing reform movement, did not allude to it. She insisted that her tenants were to be treated with a 'perfect respectfulness'[48] and possibly she considered her tenants' private lives to be their own concern.

EXPANSION AND DEVELOPMENT

Barrett's Court, which Octavia took over in 1869, was a larger undertaking than either Paradise Place or Freshwater Place, involving the construction of new blocks as well as the rehabilitation of the existing property, and here she began to attract new benefactors. Lady Ducie, for example, who was to become one of Octavia's most faithful supporters over the years, financed two of the blocks at Barrett's Court. More workers were also required here and whereas in her first two schemes Octavia had enlisted the help of her sisters and friends, she now began to give thought to enlarging the pool of women workers. Henrietta Rowland, who later went on to run housing schemes in the East End with her husband Samuel Barnett, began her work in housing here.[49] Emma Cons, one of Octavia's oldest friends, who had worked with her at Paradise Place, went on from Barrett's Court to manage a large block of tenements in Drury Lane, on the recommendation of Octavia, and she is significant as the first example we have of a paid woman housing professional.[50]

As the number of schemes increased, and spread out geographically from her Marylebone base, to St Pancras and Lambeth in 1872, and Whitechapel in 1874, it became impossible for Octavia to manage them all personally and she gave more

responsibility to her fellow workers. It appears that some of them were anxious about losing Octavia's guiding hand and she wrote to them in 1874:

> Will you all try in future to believe that though I am quite ready to resume the charge of any district where you are unable to carry on the work there, all the kingdom is your own while you hold it, to make of it what good thing you can .....you can lean on us to any extent you may deem desirable, but take the initiative yourselves, think out your problems, for you alone can; and when you have made yourselves tolerably dependent of us, then you or we may extend the work, but not until then can it be done.[51]

This policy of subsidiarity, rather than control, which Octavia pursued allowed the work to develop. She was, however, cautious about expanding without adequately trained workers and wrote in 1874 that she had not taken up the offer of a court in Lisson Grove, tempting though it was, 'partly because the price was too high, but more because of the imperfections which still exist in our organization'.[52]

By 1874 she had fifteen blocks of buildings under her care in London containing between two and three thousand tenants[53] and she took the important step of decentralising her work. She said in her evidence to the Royal Commission on Housing in 1884:

> Eight years ago I did a great deal of decentralising, instead of aggregating to myself. I have at least five distinct large centres in London; people are buying land, and training workers, and enlisting volunteers, whose name and places I do not know; it does not really at all depend on me.[54]

Octavia was anxious not to 'own' the work, but to see it expand, and it is clear that by the mid-1870s, people were already copying her methods. Her rapid success can be attributed to her skill in managing the projects and also her ability to attract wealthy philanthropists, such as Lady Ducie, Lady Pembroke and Lady Selborne, to invest in schemes under her management. She never lacked financial backers for her projects,

saying in her evidence to the Royal Commission on Housing, 'I have always a book with a long list of people who offer money for investment'.[55]

The year 1874 also saw the first extension of Octavia's work outside London. She was invited to Leeds to address a meeting on her housing methods and after the meeting she wrote to her friend Sydney Cockerell, 'they collected £3,000 at once, which is ample to buy and improve the court they want to begin on'.[56] The following year a Miss Martin was sent to London from Leeds to be trained in housing management by Octavia. This was to set a pattern and over the years more provincial workers were sent to train with Octavia. In 1876 Octavia wrote, 'applications are coming in to me from several of the large towns for help in starting similar undertakings to our own'.[57] A number of the women who worked for Octavia in London also went on to set up their own schemes in other parts of the country. Elizabeth Haldane, for example, who worked with Octavia in 1884, helped set up the Edinburgh Social Union, which by 1900 was managing the entire housing stock owned by the City Council.[58] In its turn Edinburgh became a training centre which sent workers to Perth, Dundee and Glasgow.[59] Miss Kennedy, a worker in Barrets Court in the 1870s, took over the management of her father's property in Dublin, and ran it along Octavia Hill lines. In 1879 Octavia was able to record 'considerable extension of the work, not only in London....steps are being taken to set it on foot in Liverpool, Manchester and Paris'.[60]

Further recognition of Octavia's work came in 1884 when she was asked by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners to take over the management of some of their estates in South London - areas of run-down dwellings which were causing the church some embarrassment. The Ecclesiastical Commissioners were large institutional landlords and this appointment was a significant landmark in the movement of women into large-

scale housing management. She was entrusted with the management of more of the Commissioners' estates over the next two decades, and at the time of her death in 1912 she and her fellow workers were managing Church property in Southwark, Lambeth, Westminster and Walworth. Some of these schemes involved clearance and rebuilding of a considerable scale. This gave Octavia the opportunity to fully realise her ideals of housing and community. At the Red Cross scheme in Southwark she built ornately decorated cottages, a covered playground and hall for the use of tenants and laid out gardens. New build was not usual for Octavia, but given the chance here she designed a scheme which incorporated values of landscaping and community life which were to influence the development of later garden suburbs.

Octavia achieved a national, and as we shall see, international reputation in the field of housing, but she was also active in other social movements. She was a founder member of the Charity Organization Society, set up in 1869 to co-ordinate and rationalise the relief activities of charities with that of the Poor Law, and through her work with the COS helped develop the methods of individual case-work which formed the basis of future social work training.[61] In 1875 she became the only woman member of the Central Committee of the COS, along with such eminent figures as Lord Shaftesbury and Lord Stansfield, the President of the Poor Law Board. She was a member of the COS's Dwellings Sub-committee and was instrumental in framing the report on which the Artisans' Dwellings Bill of 1875 was based. Octavia's influence in the drafting of the Bill is shown in a letter she wrote to her friend Mary Harris at the time of its passage through the House:

> Hast thou seen that Mr Cross [the Home Secretary] has brought in his Bill? Thou mayest think how intensely eager we are over it. I dined at Kay Shuttleworth's [MP] on Wednesday to discuss its clauses with him and a few

> experienced people that he might know what to press in the House.[62]

Her views on housing were increasingly sought by the Government and in 1884 she was invited to give evidence as an expert witness to the Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes. According to William Hill, the Prince of Wales, who was a member of the Commission, urged Gladstone to appoint Octavia as a member of the Commission itself, but he declined on the grounds that to appoint a woman to a Royal Commission would have been 'a serious innovation'.[63] Octavia was questioned at length on the scale of her operations, her housing methods and their efficacy in coping with the 'destructive classes', and emphasised her view that only individual 'watchful' work would answer for the needs of this group, speaking out strongly against the idea of any state involvement in housing.

Octavia also gave evidence to other Government committees, in 1892 on proposals for workmen's trains and in 1893 to the Royal Commission on Pensions for the Aged Poor, and her views were sought on all sorts of other issues. In 1889 she wrote, 'last night I dined at Lambeth: the Archbishop telegraphed to ask me. He is to speak on the clause about children being employed in theatres in the House of Lords on Monday and wanted to talk it over'.[64] Despite this public recognition, Octavia remained very much involved in the day-to-day work of her housing schemes. In a letter to her mother in 1889, she recorded how she spent her day:

> Miranda and I concocted a letter to the owners of some dreadful buildings in Southwark, which Miss J is ready to undertake.....Then we finished the accounts of Gable Cottages, and despatched reports of the same....then I settled about the painting of Hereford Cottages. We had an evening's work over our Income Tax returns...Tomorrow I collect in Deptford.[65]

By the 1880s Octavia was attracting workers from overseas. Workers came from America, Germany, Holland, and Sweden to train with her and set up similar schemes on their return home, and a number of overseas projects also copied Octavia Hill methods. Ellen Chase, an American woman, worked for six years with Octavia, from 1886 to 1892, managing a street of houses in Deptford, and on her return to Massachussets she carried out 'the same principles in the management of houses in her own country'.[66] New York and Boston also had housing schemes run by women inspired by Octavia's methods.[67] Links were early established with Germany through Octavia's friendship with Princess Alice of Hesse-Darmstadt. Princess Alice, Victoria's second daughter, had expressed an interest in Octavia's housing work in the 1860s and was taken incognito around Freshwater Place to meet the tenants. Her translation of Octavia's book, *The homes of the London poor*, in 1875, led to the formation of the Octavia Hill Verein (Society) in Berlin,[68] and Octavia's sister Florence went over to Germany for six months to assist the Princess in housing work among the poor.[69] Later we read of Octavia discussing the prospect of an extension of the work in Munich.[70]

A number of Dutch workers came to London to train with Octavia over the years. Such was her influence in Holland that in 1921 Mr Gibbon of the British Ministry of Health stated that in Amsterdam, 'all municipal house property, which is extensive, is managed by women who have been trained in her methods',[71] and by 1928 it was estimated that there were 26,648 new dwellings in the scheme.[72] A Fro Lagerstadt came from Sweden in the 1880s and carried on with housing work there on her return, and in 1912 another Swedish worker arrived for training. Miranda Hill said, 'Octavia received frequent communications from social reformers in various countries - Austria, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland: and housing improvements were set on

foot in many cases'.[73] Her ideas even reached the Russian press and Maurice records that in 1884 a Russian lady wrote to her enclosing a copy of an article on *The homes of the London poor*, which had appeared in the *Journal de St Petersburg*.[74]

The most dramatic expansion of her influence overseas occurred in South Africa. Lionel Curtis, who had worked with Octavia as the first Honorary Secretary of the National Trust, records that during the Boer War he was instrumental in the laying out of the whole of Johannesburg as a garden city, following Octavia Hill principles.[75] In 1934 Margaret Hurst was appointed by the Cape Town municipal authority as housing manager 'to assist in Housing Administration under Cape Town City Council, her especial work being the development of the Octavia Hill system in Cape Town'.[76] It is clear that Octavia was a major, and international, figure in housing, whose ideas were copied widely.

Octavia's work in London continued to grow. In 1903 she took over her largest scheme, the Walworth Estate in south London, which was part of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners' portfolio. This covered twenty-two acres and had between five and six hundred houses.[77] Management on this scale involved a considerable number of workers and Octavia wrote of the day she took it over, 'our second-in-commands took command manfully for a fortnight of all our old courts and fourteen of us met on Monday 5th October to take over the estate'.[78] She made the decision not to manage this estate herself as it would take her away from her other centres of work, and recommended to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners that they appoint her friend Miss Lumsden to undertake the day-to-day work.[79]

All this expansion of work meant that there was a great need for more trained workers and Octavia wrote in 1903:

> We would be willing to give six months training to any really promising candidate who would like to train for a chance of professional work opening out. I have had three applications for paid managers during the last year, which I am unable to fill and there are openings in provincial towns from time to time.[80]

By this stage Octavia was drawing workers from the Women's University Settlement which was set up in Southwark in 1889. She was a member of its Executive Committee and helped devise a system of training for the women settlers which involved placements with the district committees of the COS and also in her own housing schemes.[81] Some of these women went on to become full time housing workers with Octavia and in a small way housing management was beginning to emerge as a career for women graduates.[82]

The crowning recognition of Octavia's wide experience and expertise came in 1905 when she was appointed as one of the three women members of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws, (1905-1909) alongside Beatrice Webb and Helen Bosanquet. Despite the time taken up by the Commission, Octavia's housing work continued to expand and the last few years of her *Letters to Fellow Workers* record the annual acquisition of new properties in London. In 1909 Octavia wrote that she had been 'in correspondence with those interested in houses in Birmingham, Tunbridge Wells, Oxford, Nottingham, Torquay and many other places'.[83] Octavia died in 1912 and the standing in which she was held is reflected by the fact that, although they did not accept and chose instead a service in Southwark Cathedral, the family were offered a funeral, in Westminster Abbey.[84]

THE SCALE AND SCOPE OF OCTAVIA HILL'S WORK IN HOUSING

Octavia's career in housing spanned over forty years, and although she was constantly active in other spheres, by the time of her death housing projects associated with her name existed all over London. Emma Cons and Henrietta Barnett, two of Octavia's protegees, were also running large housing projects in London, housing schemes on Octavia Hill lines were established in at least eight provincial towns in Britain, and workers trained in Octavia Hill methods were running schemes in Europe, South Africa and the United States. Because she decentralised so much of her work it is not easy to estimate how many schemes she directly controlled. Miss Jeffery, one of her later workers, said that at the time of her death in 1912 Octavia directly controlled between 1,800 and 1,900 houses and flats, exclusive of rooms in tenement houses.[85] Anne Power (1987) gives a much larger figure; taking into account the properties managed by people trained by Octavia, she estimates that 'she must have controlled or influenced the management of about 15,000 tenancies, with about fifty trained women managers working with her'.[86]

From my own investigations I have identified forty-six housing schemes in London (see Appendix 1) with which Octavia was associated in some way, comprising 1,085 cottages and houses, sixty-nine tenements and seventeen blocks. This is not a complete account as it is mostly derived mainly from the annual *Letter to Fellow Workers* which did not begin until 1874, and for some schemes only 'some blocks of houses' or 'several groups of courts' are listed. By any standard this was a large operation, running into thousands of individual tenancies, the size of a medium sized local authority's housing stock today. When one considers that these projects were scattered all over London and that each project was managed locally, one can see that Octavia's housing enterprise was large and complex. I have also identified some eighty women who worked in housing over

the years, either with Octavia Hill, or with Emma Cons or Henrietta Barnett, or in the provincial and overseas schemes (see Appendix 2). Again this is an underestimate, as Octavia kept no list of the workers, and we often only have incidental mentions of workers' names. Over the forty six year period in which she worked in housing, hundreds of individual workers must have been involved.

Octavia's influence continued to be felt after her death. She herself was adamant that her method of working was not to be frozen and she said in 1898:

> When I am gone I hope my friends will not try to carry out any special system, or to follow blindly in the track which I have trodden. New circumstances require various efforts; and it is the spirit, not the dead form which should be perpetuated.[87]

These words were ignored and after her death the 'Octavia Hill system' continued as a specific form of housing management. In 1916 a group of her workers came together to form the Association of Women Housing Workers in order to promote her methods and to train women as housing professionals. Another body, the Octavia Hill Club, was set up in 1928 by Miss Jeffery, one of her later workers, and this too had a training scheme.

In the First World War a number of Octavia Hill-trained workers worked in government service managing the housing provided for munitions workers. In the 1920s and 30s several housing associations were set up on Octavia Hill lines, including in London, the St Pancras Housing Association, the St Marylebone Housing Association and the Kensington Housing Trust, and in the provinces, the Liverpool Improved Homes, the Birmingham COPEC (Conference of Christian Politics, Economics and Citizenship) and the Manchester Housing Company. Octavia Hill trained workers were also among the first local authority housing workers in the 1920s and 30s.[88]

It is ironic that Octavia Hill trained workers were active in local authority housing, as she herself had been firmly opposed to the idea of any municipal or government subsidy of housing. She told the Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes:

> I do hope that, whatever comes out of this Commission, it may not be anything which that will interfere with the principle that the homes should be self-supporting.....I do not think that any rate - or state-supported scheme could ever meet the requirements of the case, because if you once assume that it is your duty to provide for the poor at a price they assume they can pay, it will be just be the rate-in-aid of wages like the old Poor Law system, and if the labour market is in an unsatisfactory state, wages would simply fall.[89]

This is very much in line with Octavia's view of the undermining nature of charity, but over and above this, in the context of the times, it was not an unreasonable argument. The inability of the poor to earn enough to pay sufficient rent to secure decent accommodation was a factor in the housing problem and undoubtedly employers would have profited from subsidised rents by lowering wages even further. (We see something of the same situation today with private landlords adjusting their rents to meet the levels set by local housing benefit levels). It is also important to remember that the London vestries, in whom it was proposed to vest housing powers, were not the democratically elected and accountable bodies that local authorities are today, but were often made up of small property owners, who were themselves slum landlords. Engels summed them up as 'recognised centres of corruption of every kind, of nepotism and jobbery'.[90] Miss Upcott, one of Octavia's later workers commented that Octavia's experience of the corruption of such bodies coloured her view of them.[91] It would also have been surprising, at a time when ideas of state subsidised housing were new and untried, if there were not some controversy over them. Indeed, as we have seen, there was much opposition to such ideas following the report of the Royal Commission, from figures as such as Lord Shaftesbury and Richard Cross. Henrietta Barnett wrote of the 'hitherto

inconceivable proposal' that local authorities should provide housing and central government underwrite it and said that it seemed 'like a fairy-tale'.[92] The point is that political, social and economic climates change, and what seems unthinkable in one era becomes the norm in another. Municipal or socialist housing solutions were not seen as self-evidently correct in Octavia's day and to attack her for not promoting subsidised housing is as misplaced as to attack Florence Nightingale for not advocating the National Health Service.

Octavia's work in housing grew out of the model dwellings movement, but she focused on small scale development and on the rehabilitation of properties rather than clearance and rebuild. Because she was determined to decentralise her work, she was able to operate her system on a number of sites, while retaining the principle of intensive individual work with the tenants. It is clear that she established a new and innovative form of housing management which was effective in meeting the needs of some of the poorest groups in London, and that she was also successful in disseminating her methods much further afield. She was a pioneer, both in the field of housing reform and in the fact that she was a woman making a career in the public world and it is important to consider the factors which contributed to her success.

RECOGNITION

It was undoubtedly Octavia's early connection with Ruskin which was the starting point in her career. It was his financial backing which enabled Octavia to begin her work and the advantage of having the patronage of this nationally known and respected figure cannot be over-estimated. However, she went on to work independently of him and the

development and growth of her housing work reflects her success in attracting benefactors to fund her schemes, and in inspiring other people to copy her methods.

Octavia also had the advantage of coming from a family which was well-connected in the world of social reform. Her maternal grandfather was Dr Southwood Smith, the eminent sanitary reformer, who was active in the early model dwellings movement, and friendly with such important figures as Lord Shaftesbury, Edwin Chadwick, Jeremy Bentham and Charles Dickens. The marriages of her sisters Gertrude and Emily also brought influential people into the family circle. In 1865 Gertrude married Charles Lewes, the stepson of George Eliot, and in 1872 Emily married Edmund Maurice, the son of Frederick Denison Maurice, the leading figure of the Christian Socialist movement. George Eliot was deeply impressed by Octavia and is said to have based the character of Dorothea Brooke in *Middlemarch* on her.[93] She offered her financial help with her housing work[94] and in 1874 gave £200 towards the setting up of a fund to enable Octavia to give up paid work and devote herself to work with the poor.

Octavia also had a close relationship with F D Maurice and under his instruction converted from Unitarianism to Anglicanism. In the Christian Socialist circle she met people such as Llewellyn Davies and his sister Emily Davies, Thomas Hughes and his sister Jane Nassau Senior, Charles Kingsley, George MacDonald and Frederick Furnivall. Her involvement in art brought her into contact with members of the pre-Raphaelite movement, such as Rossetti, Holman-Hunt, Burne-Jones, William Morris and other leading figures such as Watts, Lord Leighton and Walter Crane. Octavia moved in an interesting and influential milieu and was at the leading edge of the progressive movement in the early stages of her career. Later on she numbered leading politicians among her acquaintances and a number of the housing workers and benefactors had very high political connections. Lady Selborne, for example, was the

daughter of Lord Salisbury, the Conservative Prime Minister, Beatrice Potter had a long relationship with Joseph Chamberlain, and Helen Gladstone, principal of the WUS from 1901 to 1906, and a friend of Octavia's, was the daughter of William Gladstone.

In addition to her skill in attracting patrons, she was clearly also an inspirational figure. Henrietta Barnett said of her husband Samuel's reaction to Octavia, 'the profound influence which Miss Octavia Hill had on Mr Barnett it is impossible to describe, she came to him as a revelation of womanly potential'.[95] Octavia was aware of the effect she had upon people and writing to her friend Mary Harris in 1873 she said, 'how strangely people do come to me Mary! I cannot make it out; there is something in the work which strongly attracts them'.[96] Undoubtedly she had a certain charisma and her sister Miranda nicknamed her St Ursula because of her capacity for attracting disciples and followers.[97] She was also extremely successful in attracting other women to the work and operated within a wide social network which facilitated this.

The way in which this network functioned shows the many interlinking connections between family, friends and work colleagues. Friends pulled in other friends and sisters followed sisters. Elizabeth Sturge, for example, came to work for Octavia in the 1880s because of a chance meeting with an old school friend, Anna Hogg, who was working for Octavia in Deptford. Katherine Potter, who first began work with Octavia, moved over to work with the Barnetts in the East End. Henrietta Barnett wrote, 'for eight years Miss Potter worked for us, bringing in her wake her hosts of friends as well as her two sisters [Beatrice and Theresa]'.[98] Other groups of sisters were involved in housing work - the five Hill sisters; the three Cons sisters; Maud and Agnes Galton who worked on the Ecclesiastical Commissioners' estates in South London; Henrietta Barnett's sister, Mrs Alice Hart, became honorary secretary and treasurer of the Barrett's Court Women and Girls' Institute, and Emma Cons' sister, Mrs Bayliss, organized concerts for the

tenants. Wider family groupings were also involved. Sophia Lonsdale, who worked with Emma Cons, was the cousin of Emma's secretary Caroline Martineau. The Stephen/Duckworth family were also involved in various ways in Octavia's work: Caroline Stephen, Lesley Stephen's sister, funded Hereford Buildings in Chelsea in 1877; Julia Duckworth, Lesley Stephen's second wife, was also among Octavia's benefactors and her daughter Stella became one of her workers; her son George Duckworth, in his role as Housing Minister in the First World War, appointed Octavia Hill trained workers to manage the housing provided for munitions workers. Pleasingly there is also a link with Virginia Woolf, Lesley Stephen's daughter, who taught in the 1900s at Morley College, the working men and women's college founded by Emma Cons.

The benefactors of Octavia's schemes were also part of a wider network, and significantly, most of them were women, (see Appendix 3). Characteristically, in many cases friendships and business relationships became identical. Octavia, for example, developed a close friendship with Lady Ducie, to whose daughter she had given drawing lessons in the early 1860s. She provided property for various of her schemes and worked with her over a long period, and Octavia records in her letters weekend visits to Lady Ducie's country home. Miss Sterling, who bought Walmer Street and Walmer Place for Octavia in 1872, was an old friend and colleague from her days at Queen's College. In 1874 friends and benefactors joined together to set up a fund to release Octavia from the necessity of earning a living through teaching in order that she might concentrate solely on her housing work.

She was also an effective propagandist of her work. Her first published piece, *Cottage property in London*, appeared in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1866. From here she went

on to publish many accounts of her schemes in popular journals of the day and in 1875 *The Homes of the London Poor*, a collection of five of her essays on housing, appeared. This was also published in America and in Germany, and such exposure brought her work before a wide and international audience. She was able to present her work in a way which accorded well with current ideas about housing, the home and class relations. She eulogised the values of home and family life in her writings and also the role of individual influence in reaching out across the class gulf. In many ways her approach epitomised the Victorian ideals of self-help and benevolent philanthropy and seemed to offer a solution to the problem of improving working-class housing without the necessity of subsidy or state intervention. (However, this was not a wholly consistent attitude because the five per cent housing she provided was effectively subsidised by her philanthropic backers who forewent the normal profit they would have received in the open housing market). The royal patronage she received also underlines the social and political acceptability of her housing work and it is clear that it was not considered in any way 'dangerously radical'.[99]

Octavia achieved recognition early in her career. By the early 1870s she was being invited around the country to talk about her work, both in housing and the organization of relief. Her expertise in housing was acknowledged by the government when they invited her to give evidence to the Royal Commission on Housing in 1884 and she was also called to give evidence to other government committees. The standing in which she was held in her own lifetime is reflected in the fact that she was one of only three women to be invited in their own right to Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee service in Westminster Abbey, along with Florence Nightingale and Josephine Butler.[100] This official recognition of Octavia as an authorative figure is striking in an era when few women were taken seriously, or were even in the public eye at all. She was one of the

small band of Victorian women who made a name for themselves on the strength of their work, rather than their social position, and showed by their example that women could successfully step out of their traditional private role. As Jane Lewis points out, she was involved in the three areas of social work in which so many women started their lives outside the home - housing work, the COS and the settlement movement[101] - and she played a pivotal role in bridging the housing reform movement and the women's movement.

OCTAVIA HILL AND THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

So far we have looked at Octavia's career and the contribution she made to housing reform. In this section I shall examine the extent to which her work contributed to the development of the women's movement. The main areas to be considered here are her creation of housing management as a career for women and the way in which she worked with, and promoted, other women. It will become clear that there were tensions apparent between the way in which she presented her work and the way that she actually operated, but what is unambiguous is that she derived a great deal of support from her women workers and friends - support which must have been essential to her in her role as a public figure. Before going on to discuss these areas, however, it is important to say something about her attitude towards the major women's campaigns of the day.

She was involved in the 1850s in the campaign for married women's property rights[102] and was associated with the Langham Place circle, friendly with women such as Barbara Leigh Smith, Mary Howitt and Emily Davies. In the 1860s she supported the movement to open up the local university exams to girls.[103] Both these movements brought together a number of women active in women's causes, and most of these women were also active in the campaign for the vote. However, Octavia, despite her

support for women's opportunities in other areas, was adamantly opposed to women's suffrage. In 1910 she wrote to *The Times* to say, 'I feel I must say how profoundly sorry I shall be if women's suffrage in any form is introduced into England'.[104]

It was not that she did not believe that women had a role, and duties, in the public world, but she held to the gendered view of citizenship expounded by John Ruskin. She continued in her letter to *The Times* to say, 'I believe that men and women help one another because they are different, different gifts and different spheres, one is the complement of the other'.[105] As women were so eminently suited to the sphere of the home, the family and the local community, she believed, they should not waste their special skills in the world of national politics - the sphere of men. Octavia was not alone in this stance and other prominent women activists, such as Mrs Humphrey Ward, Violet Markham, and initially, Beatrice Webb, were opposed to women's suffrage on the same grounds.[106]

Despite her rejection of overt political activity, Octavia was not adverse to using her considerable influence to advance the causes to which she was committed, and her statements here seem very much at odds with the way she lived her life. Her sister Miranda, writing to a friend in 1884 of Octavia's manoevres in the Open Spaces campaign, said:

> It has come to a point! When two peers and a cabinet minister call and consult her in a week. She had Fawcett here yesterday, Lord Wemyss the day before to ask what he should say in the House of Lords and the Duke of Westminster on Wednesday to ask what the Prince of Wales could do in the matter.[107]

She projected an image of herself as unsuited to public life, yet, behind the scenes, acted in an overtly political way.

Her strongly-expressed opposition to women' suffrage did not prevent Octavia from having close friendships and working relationships with women who were just as strongly in favour of it. Many of her friends and associates were committed suffragists, and of the eighty women housing workers I have been able to identify, only one, Sophia Lonsdale, (who worked with Emma Cons), who was a member of the anti-suffrage movement. Several of the workers were actively involved in the women's suffrage movement: Emma Cons was vice-president of the London Women's Suffrage Society, Margaret Wynne Nevinson, who worked for the Barnetts, was a leading member first of the Women's Social and Political Union and then the Women's Freedom League, and Lady Selborne, one of Octavia's major benefactors, was President of the Conservative Women's Suffrage Association. What is interesting is not perhaps the divergence in views on this qestion, but the equanamity with which they seemed to be accepted - which may suggest that the historians' prioritisation of the suffrage issue is misleading.

HOUSING WORK FOR WOMEN

Housing work enabled women to work with other women and for other women. Octavia did not talk of her work in terms of a 'women's mission to women', and indeed her housing work activities were directed at families, but her work by its very nature impinged most directly on women. Like social work today, it was aimed at the most poor and powerless in society, and then, as now, these were predominantly women. It was women who took the main responsibility for domestic affairs, who were likely to be at home when the lady rent collectors called and with whom negotiations over rent, repairs or housekeeping matters were carried out. Writing of the women tenants with whom she worked Octavia said:

> Such worn, haggard and careworn women cringing down to me, who has never suffered and struggled as they have without teaching or help, deadened to all sense of order or cleanliness and self-respect. 'My friends', I feel

> inclined to say to them, 'don't treat me with such respect. In spirit I bow down to you, feeling that you deserve reverence, in that you have preserved any atom of God's image in you, degraded and battered as you are by the world's pressure.[108]

This passage represents a real recognition of the crushing harshness of working women's lives and the impossibility for them of aspiring to middle class values of home and family life. There is no elision here between ideology and reality.

Housing work also enabled women to work with other women. Although Octavia enlisted the support of men in her housing work, as benefactors, committee members and organizers of the boys' and mens' clubs, she never employed men as housing workers. She also made a point where possible of employing women in other areas of her work. At the Red Cross scheme, for example, she appointed a woman gardener[109] and enlisted a woman band-leader, Mrs Julian Marshall, to train the tenants' band.[110] And clearly her fellow workers were of great importance to Octavia. She wrote in 1877, 'it is well for me that in the course of work I do naturally see many of my friends; and that I do love and care very deeply for many of my fellow workers'.[111]

The fact that she referred to them as 'fellow-workers' says a great deal about her concept of the relationship - she strove to work alongside other women rather than over them. She established no formal society, and had no committees, and a key feature of her approach was the trust she placed in her fellow workers to run their schemes in the way they thought best. She insisted that the work did not depend on her alone and devolved responsibility wherever she could. 'My ideal', she said, 'is the utmost possible independence of the lady in charge of the houses'.[112] Her concern to bolster the role of her workers was a constant theme in her correspondence and she wrote to her sister Emily in 1878 regarding the spending of some charitable funds, 'you see

I want to distribute power, not accumulate it, and to bring it *near* the workers, who are face to face with the poor'.[113]

The way in which she worked shows a feminist mode of organization, more collaborative and less hierarchical than the traditional male model, and one which was typical of the early women's movement. The Langham Place circle, of which Octavia was a member, was much more a loose grouping of friends, than a formal organization. It was not until after Octavia's death that an organization was established, the Society of Women Housing Managers, and this was distinctly more informal and less hierarchical than the male-dominated Institute of Housing which followed.[114]

The training on which Octavia insisted was also important in raising both women's self-esteem and the status of housing work to that of a profession, or at least a recognised occupation, rather than the home visiting which middle and upper class women had traditionally engaged in. Initially it was very much a 'hands-on' training and workers learnt on the job. New workers, who sometimes came to live in Octavia's household, accompanied her about her work, or were placed in one of the older established courts in order to learn the system. Later, with the establishment of the Women's University Settlement, this training became more formalised. Octavia was aware that she was creating a new profession for women and was well aware of the importance of training for it. She wrote in 1900, 'we can all remember how the training of nurses and teachers has raised the standard of work in both professions. The same change might be hoped for in the character of the management of dwellings let to the poor'.[115] Such training enabled women to move on to run their own schemes, to work for other landlords and to operate independently of Octavia. Henrietta Barnett and Emma Cons both went on to manage large scale housing schemes in London and to train workers of their own.

Her development of a strong female network of workers both supported women in their move into employment and also acted as a springboard into other areas of public life and a number of Octavia's workers went on to other public positions. Housing workers were among the first women to become Poor Law guardians, school board managers and magistrates and a number of them sat on government committees.(See Appendix 4) Of them all, Beatrice Webb, who worked for the Barnetts in the 1880s in their housing schemes, is undoubtedly the most famous today. But while her work in social research, politics and education is well known, the fact that she worked as a housing manager in the East End for three years is not.[116] Henrietta Barnett and Emma Cons, the other two women who worked on a large scale in housing in London, both went on to great achievements in their own right. Henrietta Barnett was involved with her husband in the setting up of Toynbee Hall, active in many different women and children's charities, and played a major role in the peace movement and the international settlement movement, and in 1924 she was made a DBE for her services to the community. She was also largely responsible for the creation of Hampstead Garden Suburb, a very tangible legacy of women's work in housing. Emma Cons, among other things, was the first woman alderman appointed to the LCC, vice-president of the London Women's Suffrage Society, the founder of the Old Vic as a temperance music hall, and of Morley College for Working Men and Women.

Housing work also had implications for the lives of the women involved, in that it gave them the opportunity to exercise an autonomy not normally granted to women. Martha Vicinus pointed out, in relation to settlements, that work in 'rough' areas of town offered women important freedoms:

> Neither teaching, nor nursing, nor even mission work permitted women so much spatial freedom. The streets of the slums, away from upper class men's eyes, were theirs; no matter how much they might be teased by little boys or abused by drunks, they carried a kind of

> immunity along the streets of the drab slums they sought to uplift.[117]

Importantly, housing work was also paid work. Salaried work offered women independence and was an innovation in women's philanthropic work. Octavia said, 'I usually take my paid workers two days a week and I only give them £30 p.a. to begin with; but when they take the lead they can earn 5% on as much property as they can manage, and that would mean a fair income for a woman's work in some cases'.[118] (This compares to £20 p.a. paid to the first lady clerks by the Prudential Assurance Company in the 1870s, and £100 p.a paid to the Lady Superintendent[119]). It is not always clear which of the workers were paid and which were volunteers, but it seemed to depend on the financial means of the women involved. Elizabeth Sturge, for example, who worked with Octavia in the 1880s, came from a wealthy family and stated that she did not draw a salary for her work.[120] Emma Cons, on the other hand, who came from a poorer family, needed to work for her living and was paid from an early stage in her career.

Housing work also brought women together in a shared endeavour. Octavia did not talk of sisterhood, but there was clearly a great cameraderie between the workers. Henrietta Barnett said that her group of workers used to meet with her and her husband once a week, 'not only to talk over the people under their care, but to get to know and thereby sustain each other. What fun we used to have amid all the difficulties!'[121] Miss Townsend, one of Henrietta's workers, wrote of that period, 'those of us who have lived to grow old together have a bond of union nothing could ever break'.[122] This is a very vivid evocation of the loyalty and affection engendered among women working in a common cause. It is echoed in the accounts of women activists of the time in other fields; Annie Kenney, for example, one of the leading members of the Women's Social and Political Union, said of her time in the suffragette movement, 'no companionship

can ever surpass the companionship of the militants during the childhood and youth of the suffragette fight.'[123]

Close relationships were bolstered by the fact that some of the women workers came to live in the households of Octavia, Emma Cons and Henrietta Barnett, and this intermingling of home and work life seems to have been one of the most distinctive features of women's involvement in housing work at the time.[124] Of the workers I have identified, the great majority were single, and living together may have had something to do with the difficulty that single women experienced in finding suitable and congenial accommodation. Possibly anxious parents would have expressed less opposition to their daughters' plans to leave home and work in housing schemes in rough areas if they were reassured that they would be living in respectable and supervised households. It may also have been less daunting to the women themselves in launching themselves on a new path in life to live among like-minded friends. Whatever the factors involved, such close living and working arrangements must have bonded together fellow workers into a close community with personal as well as professional ties. Perhaps in making new careers in the public world as these women were, this mutual support acted as some sort of protection against the opposition which they faced. Lilian Faderman writes:

> Women with ambition to make a name for themselves looked for kindred spirits to appreciate their achievements and sympathise with them for the coldness with which the world greeted their efforts. Such a relationship might be critical to offset society's hostility or indifference.[125]

In fact we read little of hostility to Octavia's work, and according to her main biographers, it seems to have been met with unqualified acclaim, but this was not always the case for other women. Some of them had to assert themselves against their parents in order to leave home and enter this work. Elizabeth Sturge, who worked with Octavia in the 1880s, wrote of the disapproval women of her class faced in seeking a career outside the home. 'It was a difficult problem in those days', she said, 'when

leaving home carried with it a certain loss of dignity'.[126] Margaret Wynne Nevinson, who worked in the Barnetts' housing schemes, recorded her family's vehement opposition to her plans to leave home, earn her living or go to college - or do anything in fact rather than find a husband.[127]

It is also possible that these women were carrying over their normal way of operating into their new roles. Middle class Victorian women did, after all, spend a good deal of their time staying with each other and going on holiday together and this intermingling of work and social life was a feature of the first generation of middle class women moving into the new world of work. Certainly work is a much more separate activity for us now, but for nineteenth century middle class women, paid work was a new experience and they had little idea of its conventions.[128]

Work in housing management, the career which Octavia initiated, gave women important new freedoms and the training upon which she insisted raised the status of this work from the unpaid and under-valued past-time of women with time on their hands to that of a profession in which they could earn their own livings. Housing work thus formed an important bridge for women from the private world to the public. Writing in 1889 Octavia recalled that, 'long ago hardly a woman I knew had any opportunity of devoting time to give to any grave or kindly work beyond her own household or small circle. Now there are thousands who achieve it'.[129] In its all female composition, the housing work which Octavia created can be seen as *a* women's movement, and it can also be seen as part of *the* women's movement in the nineteenth century, as it provided women with new opportunities. There are a number of aspects of this which make it ambiguous for feminism, however, and which highlight some of the tensions in Octavia's own philosophy.

While she was very effective in seizing housing as women's work, she did so on the grounds of women's special duty to the home and the family, and thus reinforced the doctrine of separate spheres and traditional gender roles. Housing work was presented as 'womanly'. 'Ladies must do it', she said, 'for it is detailed work; ladies must do it for it is household work'.[130] However, this was a two-edged argument because it depended upon the affirmation of the image of women in their traditional domestic role rather than upon a claim that women had the right to enter the sphere of paid, professional work. (In fact Octavia showed that by her own example that women could not only enter the male world of business, but could excel in it. Sir Robert Hunter, one of her colleagues in the National Trust, commented on 'her scrupulous pecuniary accuracy, her business ability, and her sobriety of judgement'[131]). These are tensions which run through other occupations identified as being within women's sphere. Both health-visiting and social work, which also involve visiting women in their homes, developed out of the philanthropic work in which women were involved in the nineteenth century. However, they are highly ambigous for women, as Dale and Foster[132] point out. On the one hand, the idea of 'women's work' gave the impetus to press for greater opportunities for women, and on the other, it reinforced dominant ideologies which trapped women in particular gender roles. And, while initially opening up new opportunities for women, both housing and social work were later to be taken over at management level by men.

There are other anomalies in the premising of housing work as suitable work for women on the basis of their supposedly 'feminine' characteristics. Housing management required not only personal care of the tenants, but knowledge of the law, of accounting and of drainage systems - not attributes normally noted as essentially 'feminine'. Octavia's own accounts of collecting rents from people who were often drunk and abusive, and of breaking up fights between tenants, show that a certain steely

determination was needed as well as housekeeping skills. The terrible, almost casual, violence of life in the courts is illustrated by the comment of one of the male tenants on seeing a door being repaired - 'the women's heads will be driv' through the door panels again in no time'.[133] Octavia did not elide over such events, but chose to emphasise the 'womanly' attributes of the work, and in particular those relating to women's role in the family.

There is a mixture of the radical and the conservative in Octavia's approach. She was doing something radical in promoting women's work, and engaging in work which in some respects was far from what was normally considered as feminine. Possibly her evocation of the womanly aspects of the work was a way of mediating this. She glorified women's role as mother and home-maker, saying 'if you want people to understand love, you must say mother',[134] and the feminine qualities she advocated were those of family duty and sympathy:

> Is not she most sympathetic, most powerful who nursed her own mother through her long illness and knew how to go quietly about the darkened room, and who entered so heartily into her sister's love and marriage; and who obeyed so perfectly the father's command when it was hardest? Better still, if she be a wife and mother herself and can enter into the responsibilities of a head of household, understand her joys and cares, knows what heroic patience it needs to keep gentle when the nerves are unhinged and the children noisy.[135]

Again there are anomalies between this public statement and Octavia's own life. She did nurse various members of her family through illnesses and did rejoice in her sisters' marriages, but she certainly did not conform to the rest of this homily. Although she was engaged once,[136] she never married, had no children, and far from living in a conventional family home, lived all her life in a shared household of women - her mother, sisters, companion and other workers. As for her father's 'hard commands', she had none to obey because James Hill, Octavia's father, lived separately from the family from her early childhood.[137]

These apparent incongruities between the ideal which she held up and her own life makes one wonder what Octavia made of her own position as a single woman, and how she managed to accommodate the idea of conventional family life as the best preparation for work among the poor with her own circumstances. Reflecting on a visit she had made to her half brother Arthur Hill and his family, she said in a letter to her sister Miranda, 'the complete home-life is very lovely, not rare thank God, but strange to me'.[138] This rather poignant comment indicates that she perhaps regretted her own deprivation of 'normal' home-life, but she does not seem to consider that it made her unfit to work among the poor. Possibly there was an element of strategy in her public rhetoric in that she may have chosen her words with care to suit her audience. The philanthropically inclined members of the middle and upper classes, to whom she appealed for funding and support, would presumably have responded more readily to language which emphasised the virtues of family life and women's duty to it, rather than to any arguments which drew attention to the unconventional lives of the women who were actually carrying out the work. And it is to be remembered in this connection that the majority of her fellow workers were also single women.

Anne Digby[139] argues that such women were occupying a 'borderland' between the conventional divisions between the sexes. They carried out their work in a 'quiet' way, and did not draw attention to the ways in which they were flouting traditional ideas about private and public roles, and thus avoided the condemnation which more militant women attracted. Her comment that 'the stress on ladylike behaviour in the bourgeois Victorian women's movement was an 'acknowledgement of the power of the dominant ideology rather than a demonstration of belief in it'[140] seems particularly apposite to Octavia's public utterances about 'womanly' work and virtues, in opposition to the way in which she and her workers actually operated. While she may have subverted some of the tenets of this ideology by the way she lived her life, she was able to present her work

as conforming to the highest ideals of women's role and influence. As a reformer, Octavia had the enviable skill of being able to place new methods of work within a conservative framework and thus play a pivotal role in bridging the housing reform movement and the women's movement.

CONCLUSIONS

If Octavia is in the public eye at all today, it is in connection with the National Trust, (and incidentally in the rose and the race-horse named after her). Yet she was one of the great names of her generation, her fame on a par with Florence Nightingale, and it is salutary to consider the way in which she has been forgotten. Her importance in the context of this study lies in her role in the housing reform movement and the women's movement, and it has become clear that it is difficult to make a neat separation between these two areas.

How can we measure Octavia's impact on housing? If judged by scale alone, we can see that the size of her operations was large and that her influence was felt throughout this country and abroad. If we take her methods as the yardstick, it is clear that she brought a new approach to housing management which was both pioneering and effective. As we have seen, she built upon the work of the model dwelling companies, but went further in that she housed classes of the poor whom they would not consider and, importantly, did not make tenants homeless by her methods. Against this must be set the fact that she actively opposed the introduction of socialist housing solutions and placed what was ultimately mistaken confidence on the willingness of commercial landlords to adopt her methods and forego profit in order to house people decently and affordably.

Octavia's housing methods did not solve the housing problem but given the scale of the need, it is unlikely that any approach which was not funded on a large scale, or statutorily enforced, could have come anywhere near doing this. Her focus on small local projects has led to her work being described as an inadequate and irrelevant response to the housing problem. However, I would argue that her approach did have merit, not only in her own terms, but also in the general movement of housing reform.

If judged on scale alone, Octavia's impact on the housing problem was relatively small, but her innovative contribution lay more in the methods she used. She pioneered an integrated method of housing management which involved as much care and attention being given to the tenants as to the housing stock and this was what became known as the 'Octavia Hill' system.

It is also mistaken to judge Octavia in the framework of the orthodox history of housing as moving inexorably towards social housing solutions because, as we have seen, her own aims were somewhat different. She did not seek to house the maximum number of people, but to improve the quality of people's lives, and to form personal relationships with her tenants. Rather than concerning herself only with the bricks and mortar of housing, she sought to build communities and to involve her tenants in the communities in which they lived. By this measure Octavia's achievement in housing lies in her humanizing influence rather than in the housing of the maximum number of people - which was never her aim - and it is on this count that her contribution should be measured. She did not waver from her original desire 'to do something to make everyone's lives a little happier and healthier' and her project succeeded on a grand scale. The language in which she expressed herself may be alien to us now, but the ideas behind them retain resonance; she made a huge impact on the housing experience of thousands of people and influenced several generations of housing

workers, and her methods are coming back into vogue again today. In an unconscious echo of Octavia Hill, Polly Toynbee wrote in 1998 about the problems of modern housing estates:

> Time and again vast sums were squandered on buildings. Many of these estates now are not slums. They are physically in reasonable shape, but their inhabitants are not. Regeneration used to mean bricks and mortar, but from now on it will mean regenerating the people instead.[141]

With the recent emergence of 'residualised' estates and the management problems which they pose, the methods which Octavia devised are being rediscovered. We see housing experts such as David Page urging the return of more intensive housing management of the sort which Octavia pioneered.[142] Octavia's response was one which met particular circumstances, which may recur, and it is in this context that her work should be viewed.

The question of Octavia's reputation has been discussed and it is remarkable that she is the only woman working in housing who is accorded any place in the housing literature. This can partly be explained by the fact that she wrote prolifically about her work, and also by the influence and standing of her early supporters, particularly, John Ruskin. Octavia managed to make her housing work acceptable to the general public and her evocation of home and family life fitted in very well with Victorian ideology. Her housing schemes were only a part of her work though and, as we have seen, she was active in many other areas - the COS, the Open Spaces movement, the Women's University Settlement - and these interests came together to form her overall work to improve the life of the people. She was equally effective in all the areas she entered and it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that her personality and ability were the major factors in her success.

How can we assess Octavia as a feminist? Her achievements and the status she reached certainly make her an outstanding figure in women's history and as such a role model and inspiration to other women. However, as we have seen, Octavia was a paradoxical figure and it is not easy to pin a label on her. While she acted very much on the public stage, she talked in terms of women's duty being in the private world of home and family and while she supported some women's causes, she was adamantly opposed to what was perhaps the greatest women's cause of all in the early twentieth century, that of the vote. The main areas in which she made a contribution to the women's movement lie in her creation of housing management as a new career for women, her work with her women tenants and her promotion of her fellow workers. The way in which women lived their lives and related to other women can also be seen as feminist and here Octavia, with her identification with women and her involvement in women's networks, exemplified many of the traits of the early women's movement.

She worked through an extensive network of family, friends and colleagues, which overlapped at many points. Such networking played an important role in the early women's movement, connecting women active in differerent fields and campaigns, and Octavia exemplifies this particular 'process' element of feminism. These links show very clearly the complex and overlapping nature of the networks in which Octavia was involved. It does not seem possible to separate out the links of personal friendship and family relationships from those of work, but I think this is very characteristic of a particular way of working which could be said to be peculiarly 'feminine' or perhaps 'feminist'. The central role which these women played in each others' lives, and the support and encouragement they gave each other is as important as public achievements in defining their status as feminists. The experience which women gained in housing enabled a number of them to go on into other areas of public work, and some of the later workers moved into local authority housing departments and housing

associations. Octavia and her workers created the profession of housing management as we understand it today and they were in the vanguard of the movement of middle class women into the welfare professions.

As we have seen, there are many paradoxes in Octavia's life. Perhaps in distilling information from writings in letters, books and speeches over a long career, it would be possible to find a mass of seemingly contradictory opinions and attitudes in anyone's life. It is nevertheless true that Octavia was a remarkable contradictory figure. Her behaviour was often at odds with her stated beliefs, but these conflicts must have arisen in part from the difficulty of living a life that was breaking the bounds of the conventional role for women. She was a pioneer, a trail-blazer, for women in many ways, and while she was not alone in her housing work or her social work - many other women also active in these areas - her achievements, her public status and her concern to promote other women, make her an outstanding figure in women's history.

Although Octavia housed single women in her housing schemes, her work was mainly aimed at families and it is possible that she achieved such prominence partly because of this. Other women, as will be discussed later, who worked on behalf of single women, have been accorded no place in the history of the housing reform movement. It is clear from contemporary evidence that single working-class women were in a particularly disadvantaged position in the housing market, and in the next chapter I intend to explore the question of where these women lived and the special difficulties which faced them.

NOTES

1. Octavia Hill to Mary Harris, July 1857, in E Moberley Bell, Octavia Hill: a biography, Constable & Co., 1942, p.39

2. E Moberley Bell, op.cit., p.ix.

3. A Wohl, The eternal slum: housing and social policy in Victorian London, Edward Arnold, 1977, p.195

4. G Stedman Jones, Outcast London: a study in the relationship between classes in Victorian Society, Penguin, 1976, p.194

5. A reading list kindly supplied by the National Trust lists 41 works by Octavia Hill, and 36 about her.

6. Octavia Hill's Letters on housing 1864-1911, edited by Elinor Southwood Ouvry, Adelphi Bookshop, 1933

7. C E Maurice, (ed.), Life of Octavia Hill as told in her letters, Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1913

8. See Gillian Darley, Octavia Hill: a life, Constable & Co., 1990

9. See E Moberly Bell, op.cit., Introduction, p.xv

10. Emily Southwood Maurice, (ed.), Octavia Hill: early ideals, George Allen & Unwin, 1928

11. See Ellen Chase, Tenant friends in old Deptford, Williams & Norgate Ltd., 1929; Margaret Wynne Nevinson, Life's fitful fever: a volume of memories, A & C Black, 1926; Mrs S A Barnett, Canon Barnett: his life, work and friends, John Murray, 1921, Elizabeth Sturge, Reminiscences of my life, printed for private circulation, 1928

12. E Moberly Bell, 1942

13. Ibid, p.13

14. William Thompson Hill, Octavia Hill: pioneer of the National Trust and housing reformer, Hutchinson, 1956

15. Gillian Darley, op.cit., 1990

16. Cedric Pugh is unusual in casting a more positive light on Octavia Hill's housing methods, seeing them as a neglected opportunity to broaden the base of social housing in this country. See C Pugh, Housing in capitalist societies, Gower, 1980

17. See, for example, Anne Power, Property before people: the management of twentieth century council housing, Allen & Unwin, 1987, Enid Gauldie, Cruel habitations: a history of working class housing, 1780-1918, George Allen & Unwin, 1974; Marion Brion and Anthea Tinker, Women in housing: access and influence, Housing Centre Trust, 1980

18. Marion Brion, Women in the housing service, Routledge, 1995

19. Brion cites here A Wohl, op.cit., P Spicker, Legacy of Octavia Hill, *Housing*, June, 1985, 39-40, P Malpass, Octavia Hill, *New Society*, 62 (1042), 4 November 1982, 206-208, and J Tarn, Five per cent philanthropy, Cambridge University Press, 1973. M Brion, op.cit., pp.14-15

20. J Dale and P Foster, Feminists and state welfare, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986

21. Octavia Hill Birthplace Museum Trust, Wisbech

22. Ibid

23. Nancy Boyd, Josephine Butler, Octavia Hill, Florence Nightingale: three Victorian women who changed their world, Macmillan, 1982

24. Jane Lewis, Women and social action in Victorian and Edwardian England, Edward Elgar Publishing, 1991

25. Juliet Parker, Women and welfare: ten Victorian women in public social service, Macmillan, 1988

26. See the exchange of letters between Octavia Hill and John Ruskin in Early Ideals, edited by Emily S Maurice, 1928

27. Octavia Hill to Mrs Shaen, 19 April 1864 in C E Maurice, op. cit., p.212

28. Octavia Hill, Cottage property in London, *Fortnightly Review*, November 1866, reprinted in Homes of the London Poor, Macmillan & Co., 1883, p.21

29. Ibid, p.16

30. E S Ouvry, op.cit., p.5

31. Octavia Hill to Mary Harris, 1866, in Emily S Maurice, op.cit., p.198

32. Evidence of Octavia Hill to the Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes, (1885), Vol.II, para.9002, p.299

33. Ibid, para.8864, p.290

34. For her analysis of the housing problems of London see Octavia Hill, 'Why the Artisans' Dwellings Bill was wanted', *Macmillans Magazine* 1874, reprinted in Homes of the London Poor, 1875, which sets out the problems of population growth and the need for the poor to live near their work; for her views on the need for block dwellings see Octavia Hill, 'Small houses in London', 1886, in House property and its management: some papers on the methods of management introduced by Miss Octavia Hill and adapted to modern conditions, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1921, which shows her recognition that high land costs meant that the population could not be housed without high density block building.

35. In 1883 Octavia Hill wrote that she had 'several rooms let at 2s and many at 2s 9d each'. (Common sense and the dwellings of the poor, reprinted in R Whelan, Octavia Hill and the social housing debate, IEA Health and welfare unit, 1998, p.98)The average rents quoted in the Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes were 3s 10 3/4d for a single room. Model Dwelling Companies charged from 2s 2d to 2s 9d.

36. E S Ouvry, op.cit., p.10

37. See Octavia Hill, 'Cottage property in London', in Homes of the London poor, p.22

38. Octavia Hill, 'Landlords and tenants in London', in Homes of the London poor, 1875, pp.102-3

39. Ibid, pp.46-7

40. Ibid

41. Octavia Hill recorded, 'I brought up from the country ninety bunches of flowers. There was one for each family'.(C E Maurice, op.cit., p.268)

42. Octavia Hill, 'Four years management of a London court', in Homes of the London poor, p.57

43. Ibid, p.59

44. RCHWC, op.cit, para.8967, p.297

45. Handwritten memoir of the Hon Mrs Maclagan, (Ouvry papers) quoted in G Darley op.cit., p.136

46. RCHWC, op.cit., para 8967, p.297

47. Robert Whelan, (ed.), Octavia Hill and the social housing debate: essays and letters by Octavia Hill, IEA Health and Welfare Unit, 1998, p.7

48. Octavia Hill, 'Landlords and tenants in London', in Homes of the London poor, p.42

49. For an account of Henrietta Barnett's life and work see her biography of her husband, Mrs S A Barnett, Canon Barnett: his life, work and friends, John Murray, 1921

50. For an account of Emma Cons' career see Lillian Baylis and Cicely Hamilton, The Old Vic, Jonathan Cape Ltd, 1926

51. Elinor Southwood Ouvry, 1933, p.16.

52. Ibid, p.15

53. Ibid, p.13.

54. RCHWC, op.cit., para.8964, p.296

55. Ibid, para.8987, p.298

56. Octavia Hill to Mr Cockerell, 8 December 1874, in C E Maurice, op.cit., p.312

57. E S Ouvry, op.cit., p.18

58. See G Darley, op.cit., pp.247-8

59. See Octavia Hill to her mother 26 November 1902, quoted in C E Maurice, op. cit., p.553

60. Quoted in E S Ouvry, op.cit., p.21

61. For a description of her work with the COS see, Octavia Hill, Report to the Local Government Board on the co-ordination of volunteers and Poor Law officials, 1874

62. Octavia Hill to Mary Harris 14 February 1875, in C E Maurice, op.cit., p.319

63. W T Thompson, op.cit., p.154

64. Octavia Hill to her mother, 21 July 1889, in C E Maurice, op.cit., p.498

65. Octavia Hill to her mother, 28 April 1889, in C E Maurice, op.cit., p.501

66. C E Maurice, op.cit., p.441

67. See G Darley, op.cit., p.223

68. Ibid, pp.441-2

69. See W T Hill, op.cit., p.185

70. Octavia Hill to Miss Howitt, 10 June 1896 in C E Maurice, op.cit., p.537

71. Octavia Hill, House property and its management, George, Allen and Unwin, 1921, Introduction by I Gibbon

72. See E S Southwood, op.cit., p.11

73. Emily Maurice, op.cit., p.211

74. C.E. Maurice, op. cit., p.449

75. Lionel Curtis wrote,' It was Canon Barnett who put me in touch with Octavia Hill. During the South African War Lord Milner appointed me to organize a municipality for Johannesburg, which had been laid out by Kruger's surveyor as a mining camp, two and a half miles in area. The Town Council got Milner, a benevolent autocrat, to enlarge this area, which was already congested to over eighty square miles. The council then threw out tramways to carry the people to the suburbs. Johannesburg soon became a garden city in which most houses stood in their own gardens. I shall always remember Octavia Hill's pleasure when I explained how her idea had been realised under Milner on the other side of the world'. (W T Hill, op.cit., pp.13-14)

76. Marion Brion, 1995, p.80

77. E S Ouvry, op.cit., p.47.

78. Ibid, p.56

79. Ibid, p.47

80. Ibid, p.49-50

81. It was women on the executive committee of the WUS who pioneered systenatic training for the new profession of social work, and whose classes later developed in 1912 into the the School of Sociology at the LSE. (Betty Judge, Octavia Hill and the Women's University Settlement, Booklet No.1 in a series published by the Octavia Hill Society and Birthplace Museum Trust, 1994)

82. University graduates among the housing workers included: Miss Argles (Lady Margaret Hall); Miss Mary Clover (Girton); Miss Bartlett (Lady Margaret Hall); Miss Joan Gruner (Girton); Miss Hammond (Lady Margaret Hall); Miss Edith Neville (Newnham); Miss Jane Upcott (Somerville)

83. E S Ouvry, op.cit., p.62

84. E Moberley Bell, op.cit., p.277

85. M Brion, op.cit., p.12

86. Anne Power, op.cit., p.14

87. C E Maurice, op.cit., p.582

88. See Marion Brion, 1995, op.cit. for a discussion of the development of women's housing work after Octavia Hill's death.

89. RCHWC, op.cit., para.8870, p.292

90. F Engels, The housing question, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1975, p.22

91. Marion Brion, op. cit., p.13

92. Mrs S A Barnett, Homes not habitations, Spottiswood, Ballantyne & Co. Ltd., no date, p.2

93. Gillian Darley, op.cit., p.137

94. Octavia wrote of a visit to George Eliot and Charles Lewes in 1865, 'I asked her what kind of help she had meant I should ask for. She told me that if I saw something she could do with money, and could ask her more easily than anyone else, she would be so happy to give it. (Octavia Hill to Mary Harris, 18 January 1865, in Emily S Maurice, op.cit., p.80)

95. Mrs S A Barnett, op.cit., p.29

96. Octavia Hill to Miranda Hill, 16 March 1873, in C E Maurice, op.cit., p.284

97. Ibid, p.240

98. Henrietta Barnett, 1921, op.cit., p.106

99. In addition to Princess Alice's interest in Octavia's work, the Prince and Princess of Wales opened various of the housing schemes, Princess Louise became president of the Kyrle Society and in 1890 she was invited to Marlborough House to meet the Queen.

79. Gillian Darley, op.cit., p.256

101. Jane Lewis, op.cit., p.26

102. Mary Howitt recalled the teenaged Octavia coming to her house to help paste up signatures for the first Married Women's Property Right petition. Mary Howitt: an autobiography, edited by her daughter Margaret Howitt, William Ibister Ltd;, 1869, Vol.2, p.116

103. Octavia was a member of the London School Mistresses Association founded by Emily Davies and in 1864 helped her to collect signatures for the petition to enter girls for the local university set examinations (Octavia Hill to Emily Davies, 18 February 1864, in C E Maurice, op. cit., p.209)

104. See E Moberley Bell, op.cit., pp.270-1

105. Ibid, p.270

106. See Jane Lewis, op.cit., for a discussion of women social activists' attitudes towards the vote.

107. Miranda Hill to Mary Harris, in E Moberley Bell, op.cit., p.240.

108. Octavia Hill to Mary Harris, undated, in Emily S Maurice, op.cit., p.190

109. Miss Wilkinson, see The Girton Review, December 1891, p.4

110. C E Maurice, op. cit., p.506

111. Octavia Hill to Mrs Gillum, 7 February 1877, in C E Maurice, op.cit., p.347

112. E S Ouvry, op.cit., p.13

113. Octavia Hill to Emily Hill, 9 February 1878 in C E Maurice, op cit, p.358

114. Marion Brion, op.cit., p.161

115. Octavia Hill, Letter to Fellow Workers, 1900, in E S Ouvry, p.66.

116. See Norma and Jean Mackenzie, (eds.), The diary of Beatrice Webb, Vol.1, 1873-92, Virago, 1982 for an account of this period of her life.

117. Martha Vicinus, Independent women: work and community for single women 1850-1920, Virago Press Ltd., 1985, p.220

118. RCHWC, op.cit., para.8985, p.299

119. Ellen Jordan, 'Lady clerks at the Prudential: the beginnings of vertical segregation by sex in clerical work in nineteenth century Britain', in Gender and History, Vol.8, No.1, April 1990, p. 65

120. Elizabeth Sturge, op.cit., p.46

121. Mrs S A Barnett, 1921, p.133.

122. Ibid, p.120

123. Annie Kenney, Memories of a militant, Edward Arnold and Co., 1924, p.vii.

124. Anna Hogg, Elizabeth Sturge, Katherine Potter and Helen Parrish were among the workers who lived with Octavia for short periods, and from the 1880s onwards she shared a permanent household with Miranda, her sister, Harriot Yorke her companion, and two of the workers, Miss Pearson and Miss Simm.

125. Lillian Faderman, Surpassing the love of men: romantic friendships and love between women from the Renaissance to the present, The Women's Press, 1985, pp.163-4.

126. Elizabeth Sturge, op.cit., p.25

127. Margaret Wynne Nevinson, Life's fitful fever: a volume of memories, A & C Black Ltd., 1926

128. This sense of the alienness of the male world of work carried over well into the twentieth century. Jill Tweedie, the feminist journalist, writing of her introduction to the world of work in the 1960s says:

> For me the working world was another country.....My father, and all the men in my childhood and adolescence, daily travelled in and out but appeared to be bound by some Mafia oath never to talk of what happened there to wives, daughters or anyone else of the female sex.....I remained, as ever, unable to discern the divisions between public and private, contacts and friends, kindness and more venal favours, the business world and the personal; it was all one to me.
> (Jill Tweedie, Eating children, 1994, Penguin Books, 1994, pp.350-2)

129. Octavia Hill, A few words to fresh workers, *Nineteenth Century*, September 1889, quoted in G Darley, op.cit., p.260

130. E S Ouvry, op.cit., p.23.

131. Ibid, p.16.

132. J Dale & P Foster, op.cit., p.22

133. Octavia Hill, 'Landlords and tenants in London', in Homes of the London poor, p.43

134. E S Maurice, op.cit., p.233.

135. Octavia Hill, 'District Visiting' in Our Common Land, Macmillan & Co., 1877, pp.24-5

136. In 1877, aged thirty-nine, Octavia became engaged to Edward Bond, a lawyer, with whom she had worked in the Open Spaces campaign, and who had become involved in her housing work. The engagment was short-lived and was broken off, it seems, because of the opposition of Bond's mother to Octavia, possibly because she was six years his senior.

137. James Hill, a corn merchant and banker, went bankrupt in the early 1840s and suffered a severe mental breakdown. On medical advice he lived separately from the rest of his family until his death nearly thirty years later.

138. Octavia Hill to Miranda Hill, in E S Maurice, op.cit., p.99

139. Anne Digby, 'Victorian values and women in public and private', in T C Smout, (ed.), Victorian values: a joint symposium of the Royal Society of Edinburgh and the British Academy, 1990, Proceedings of the British Academy 78, Oxford University Press, 1992

140. Ibid, p.10

141. Polly Toynbee, 'The estate they're in', The Guardian, 15 September, 1998

142. David Page, Building for communities: a study of new housing association estates, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 1993

Chapter 5

WHERE WOMEN LIVED - THE HOUSING OF SINGLE WORKING WOMEN

The plain unvarnished truth is that work open to women is not sufficiently well-paid to enable them to live in a condition of ordinary decency and comfort.
(Ethel Snowden, 1913[1])

As we have seen the housing conditions of the working classes were the subject of much concern in the last century, and were considered important enough to warrant a Royal Commission. However, the main focus of concern and intervention was the working-class male and his dependants and the housing situation of single people, either men or women, did not attract such attention. We have also seen that the ideology of the home centred around the family and assumed a domestic role for women as wives, mothers and home-makers. Although the majority of women did marry, a considerable proportion did not, and census figures show that single women made up over a third of all adult women throughout the period.[2] Much work has been done on the economic position of working women,[3] but little attention has been paid to the matter of their housing and the central question of this chapter is - where and how did these women live?

The focus will be upon the housing situation of single working women, that is, those women without the support of a male partner, whether single, widowed or deserted, who worked for their livings. Clearly women could move in and out of these categories over the course of a life-time and their housing situation vary accordingly, but it was women on their own who were those most disadvantaged economically and it is these which will be the object of study. Girls under the age of fifteen will also be included

as many working-class girls left their parental home to begin work at an earlier age.[4] Childhood lasted longer among the middle and upper classes and girls generally did not leave home until they married, or work outside the home. It is important to remember, however, that an increasing number of lower middle-class and middle-class women were beginning to enter paid employment and leave home over the period and they too faced the problem of finding suitable accommodation.

To answer the question of where single working women lived is an ambitious project and clearly it will not be possible to provide a definitive analysis of the great variety of different situations of several million women over some fifty years. The task is made a little easier by the fact that the types of accommodation in which women lived correlated closely with the types of work they did. I intend therefore to map out the major sources of employment for women in the period, using data derived from the population censuses for 1861 and 1911, approximately the beginning and end of the period in question. The three major occupations for women were domestic service, textile manufacture and the dress trade.[5] In both domestic service and the dress trade employees generally lived in accommodation tied to their work, as they also did in shop work, a growing source of employment for women over the period. In the textile trades, however, and the myriad other occupations in which women were involved, accommodation was not provided and women found their own housing, either remaining in their parental homes or living in lodgings or rooms. There were also large numbers of women, particularly older women and widows, who supported themselves by taking in lodgers,[6] younger women who lived in supervised accommodation lodges provided by charitable societies, and a shifting population of the poorest women who lived in common lodging houses and shelters.[7] Thousands of women also lived in the workhouse on a temporary or permanent basis[8]: women who were too old to work,

deserted wives, widows, unmarried mothers, and the physically infirm or 'feeble-minded' who could not support themselves.[9] The major way in which single working women were housed, however, was through 'living-in', and one of the questions to be discussed is to what extent this matched up to the idealised vision of 'home' for women.

A further question to consider in connection with this is the extent to which the housing position of single women could be said to amount to a form of 'hidden homelessness'. This was not a term, or concept, that was named or recognised in the period, but it is used today to describe the situation of women who, while not being homeless in the sense of lacking a roof over their heads, remain in unsatisfactory housing arrangements for the want of anywhere else to go. According to a recent definition it means 'living in temporary or insecure housing, in poor or overcrowded conditions, [or being] forced to share accommodation'.[10] By this definition almost the entire working class of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries could be described as living in a condition of hidden homelessness. However, it has some extra applicability to women in the period, if one remembers that many single working women, unlike men, lived as employees in other people's households in which they had no security and no rights, and often in conditions which were the antithesis of anything which could be said to amount to a 'home'. While these women were housed in that they had a roof over their heads, for many that roof was resorted to, or remained under, for lack of any other choices.

Before going on to discuss the situation of women in the living-in trades it is important to consider what their other 'choices' might have been. I shall, therefore, first, briefly outline the economic circumstances of single working women in the period; second,

discuss the sources of information relating to women's housing; third, quantify the numbers of women living in the major forms of accommodation and finally provide an evaluation of the major living-in trades in terms of the experience of 'home' which they provided.

A number of inter-related factors determined where single women lived - age, family position, income, social class, and geographical area - all played a role and it is important to remember that individuals' circumstances could change over the course of a lifetime. The dominant factor, however, was occupation. This dictated accommodation to a degree which we are no longer familiar with today, and because men and women tended to work in segregated trades, their housing experience was necessarily different. Domestic service, the dress trade and shop-work were not exclusively female occupations, but they were predominantly so.[11] The equivalent trades for men in terms of the numbers employed were mining, agriculture and building.[12] Tied accommodation was common in the first two, but this involved the provision of a cottage or lodgings as part of the workers' wage, rather than living in other peoples' households. Furthermore, it meant that wives and families could also be housed, whereas as female live-in workers had to leave their employment on marriage.

Living-in had many disadvantages, as we shall see, but at least it solved the immediate question of housing. For women working in trades which did not provide accommodation, the question of how to house themselves was a pressing one as they were paid so little. Women's work tended to be low-skilled, low status and low paid, and often subject to seasonal unemployment. Only in the textile towns of the north, where women were essential to the productive work-force, were women admitted to

trade union membership or paid anything approaching a man's wage,[13] but even in these trades women were paid considerably less than men.[14] 'Women's wages', an Edwardian commentator wrote, 'amount, roughly speaking, to one half of those of a man'.[15] Most women had no training and no skills, apart from the domestic, and thus were in a very weak position to compete in the job market with men. Josephine Butler wrote compellingly of the situation of working women struggling in the labour market in mid-Victorian England:

> Armies of women, counted by thousands in all our towns and cities,....are forced downwards to the paths of hell by the pressures from above, through the shutting up of avenues to a livelihood by means of trade monopolies among men and through the absence of any instruction or qualification to qualify them for employment.[16]

The 'paths of hell' referred to here was prostitution and there is ample evidence that sheer poverty forced many women into it as a means of keeping body and soul together.[17]

The low wages which women received reflected the belief that single women were free of dependants, but single women, as Jessie Boucheret pointed out in 1869, could have 'aged and sick parents' to support.[18] This also applied to widowed and deserted mothers who also had children to maintain. Women's longer life expectancy meant that widowhood came to most married women, and for working-class, and a proportion of middle-class, women this meant not only bereavement but also impoverishment. The report of the 1911 census commenting on the high numbers of widows who worked, said, 'the figures are eloquent of the bitter necessity compelling the shouldering of such a double burden'.[19] Desertion by their husbands also had devastating economic effects on the women affected, and while it is not possible to distinguish deserted wives in the census returns, the number of married women receiving poor law relief suggests that the proportion was high.[20] The rate of relief

was very low and could be refused to women if they had illegitimate children, took in lodgers or failed to keep the house and children clean.[21]

Once youth had passed, women's chance of marriage, or remarriage, decreased and their earning power also lessened; contemporary evidence shows that the common fate of many older women without a husband was to scrape a living as a charwoman, or laundress, or to go into the workhouse.[22] Mary Higgs, writing in 1910, commented on the miserable situation of older working-class women, 'widows, separated wives, old age pension women', she said, 'drift miserably from daughter to daughter, or lodging to lodging, unwanted, whereas all they want is a self-respecting place to live, other than the workhouse'.[23]

Poverty then was a major factor in the lives of single working women's lives and this clearly affected their access to housing. Large families, overcrowding and poverty meant that most young women of the working classes had to leave the parental home at an early age in order to earn a living. Those who went into one of the living-in trades had their accommodation provided, but women who worked in factories, mills, potteries and workshops generally went into lodgings or rented small rooms. The low wages they received meant that the accommodation they could afford was of the meanest. One of Charles Booth's researchers wrote of the sort of lodgings available to working women that 'those within reach of a woman worker's purse are in workman's dwellings, and in many ways not desirable for a single woman; those in better surroundings are almost unattainable in price'.[24] Much disapproval was expressed of young women living in lodgings. Dr John Woodman, Medical Officer for Exeter, gave evidence to the Royal Commission the Housing of the Working Classes on the situation of mill girls living in lodgings. He was asked, 'Are there any large

number who emancipate themselves entirely, as you say, from home influences and live together, forming homes and communities of their own....?'[25] He replied, 'I am very much afraid that they emancipate themselves from home influence very early'.[26] The Commission had also heard evidence on the poor conditions in these girls' lodgings, but it was the factor of independence which appeared to be the major cause for concern.

The other factor which must be taken into account in considering the sorts of work which women did, and hence the form of accommodation in which they lived, is geography.[27] There were marked regional variations in occupations in the period; in some areas there was little opportunity for full-time employment for women and in others the nature of the local economy meant that women went out to work as a matter of course. In the cotton towns of Lancashire, for example, the proportion of women in employment was about half, whereas in mining areas, such as Durham and Rhondda, the proportion went down to about fifteen per cent.[28] Domestic service was ubiquitous in both town and country, but a lower proportion of women were employed in service in urban areas than in rural,[29] reflecting the greater variety of employment available to women in towns.

Single women faced great difficulties in finding suitable and affordable housing and greater difficulties in doing so than did men. It was not only women in the unskilled trades who were affected; Mary Higgs writing in 1910 said:

> The difficulty of finding lodging accommodation extends through all classes of women. It is not confined to the poorest. Crowds of girls and women are sucked into our large towns: teachers, shop-girls, clerks as well as industrials, but little care has been bestowed on the problem, "where are they to live?" [30]

WHERE DID WOMEN LIVE?

The question of where women lived is not a straightforward or easy one to answer as there are no official records which directly relate types of housing to different demographic groups and none which deal solely with the housing of single women. Information has to be pieced together from a number of sources, the most important of which is the national census.[31] The census is the largest and most complete source of statistical data we have on the whole population on sex, marital status, ages, occupations, and household composition, and from these measures it is possible to make certain deductions about where women lived. As we know that nearly all domestic servants, and the majority of dress workers and shop assistants, lived in accommodation provided by their employers, and that textile workers found their own accommodation, I have used occupation as a proxy variable for housing and mapped out the numbers of women working in these major occupations over the period.

This provides an approximation of where single women worked, and therefore lived, but there are certain qualifications to be made. Firstly, while we know that apart from the small proportion employed as day girls, domestic servants universally lived in and were single,[32] this was not so uniformly the case for the dress trade or for shop work. Both of these trades employed day workers in addition to live-in workers and the census does not differentiate between the two.

Secondly, there are particular problems with the recording of women's economic activity by the census. As Higgs notes, figures in census tables are not 'hard facts' or 'raw data', but constructs created by men who held certain assumptions about women's position in society, especially their role as dependants'.[33] It was not until 1911 that enumerators were instructed that 'the occupation of women.....generally

engaged in assisting relatives in trade of business must be fully stated'.[34] Before this women were recorded at times as wives, daughters etc, regardless of whether or not they worked in their family trade and at other times under the occupational heading of their male relative.[35] At some censuses female relatives of the head of household were included in the totals for domestic servants rather than being enumerated separately.[36] Women who moved in and out of occupational and domestic roles, or who mingled the two, as many did, are difficult to map from the census.

There are also particular difficulties in analysing the data relating to the retail and dress trades as there was an overlap between the two. Few of the categories for the retail sector distinguished between those engaged in production, processing and distribution,[37] and dealers in dress were not separated from makers until 1901.[38] Moreover, the census category 'workers in dress' encompassed a number of different trades. The 1911 census lists dressmakers, milliners, drapers, linen drapers, mercers, tailors, stay and corset makers, shirt-makers, seamstresses, boot, shoe and slipper makers under this heading. Not all of these branches of the trade involved living in, and I have not been able to locate records which establish which ones did and which ones did not. It is clear from various accounts that the practice was wide-spread among dress-making and millinery establishments,[39] and I have therefore included figures for only these two categories.

Shop work presents particular difficulties as the numbers working in this trade were not recorded accurately by the census.[40] In 1861 46,281 females in England and Wales were recorded as working in shops of various kinds, but it is not clear in what capacity, and 4,520 were designated just as shop women. In 1911, in addition to the 47,345 females recorded as general or unclassified shopkeepers or dealers, the census report

recorded 44,570 people, undifferentiated by sex, employed in multiple shops, and commented that this was probably a considerable underestimate.[41] The Interdepartmental Committee on the Truck Acts appointed in 1906 to enquire into the truck system in a number of trades heard evidence that the total number of shop assistants was about 750,000 and that between 400,000 and 450,000 of them lived in.[42] No sex breakdown was given in these figures, but as shop work employed roughly equal numbers of men and women, we can assume that approximately 200,000 females were living-in as shop assistants in the Edwardian period.

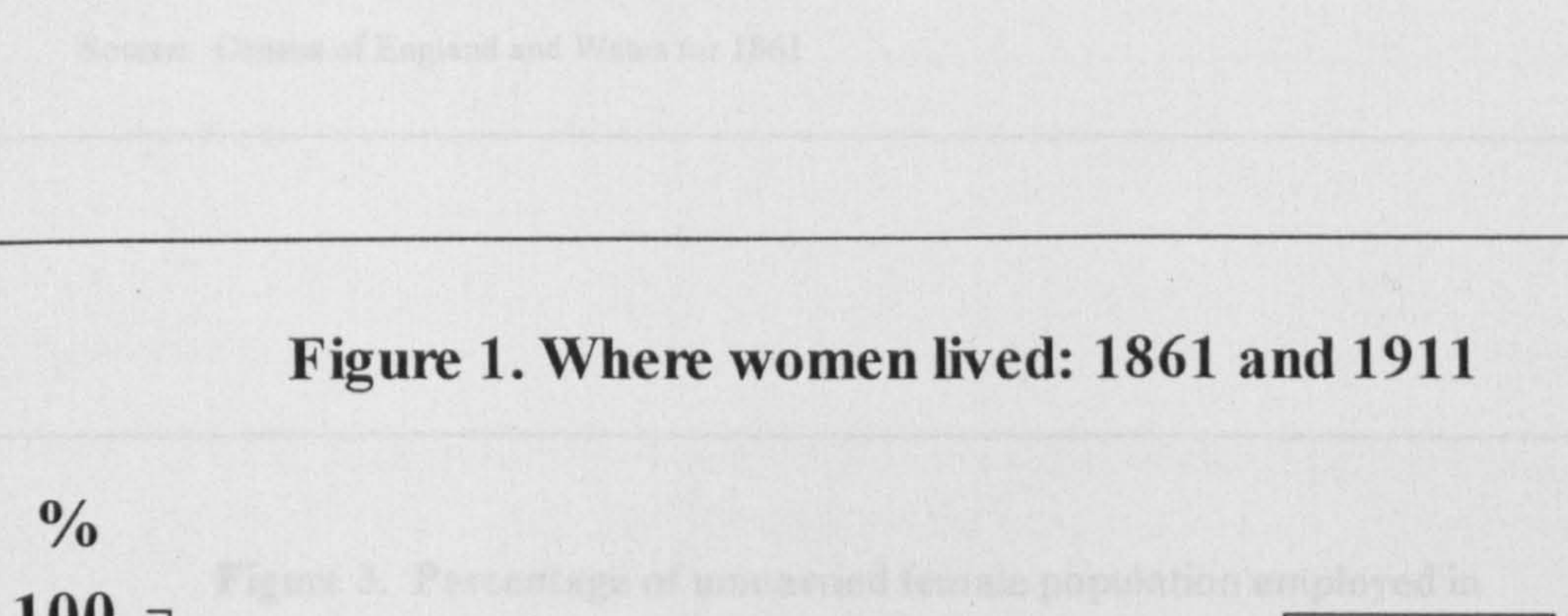
Finally, it is important to remember that there are many anomalies contained within these occupational categories as well as problems with the data. Different questions were asked at different times, categories were added or changed, and different instructions were given as to the interpretation of questions.[43] A major difficulty which occurs is that retired persons were not differentiated from those still in employment in the 1861 census, so the numbers recorded in various occupational categories are misleading. It is difficult to extract figures on women's occupations, and hence housing, from the census which are consistent or strictly comparable over time. However, even given all these caveats, the census remains the most complete and accurate source of information we have on the occupations of women, and while it may have considerably underestimated the extent of married women's employment, the returns for single women in employment are more accurate.

RESULTS

The tables below contain information on female employment extracted from the census reports of 1861 and 1911 for England and Wales. (For the full figures from which this information is derived see Appendices 5-8). I have grouped them into three main

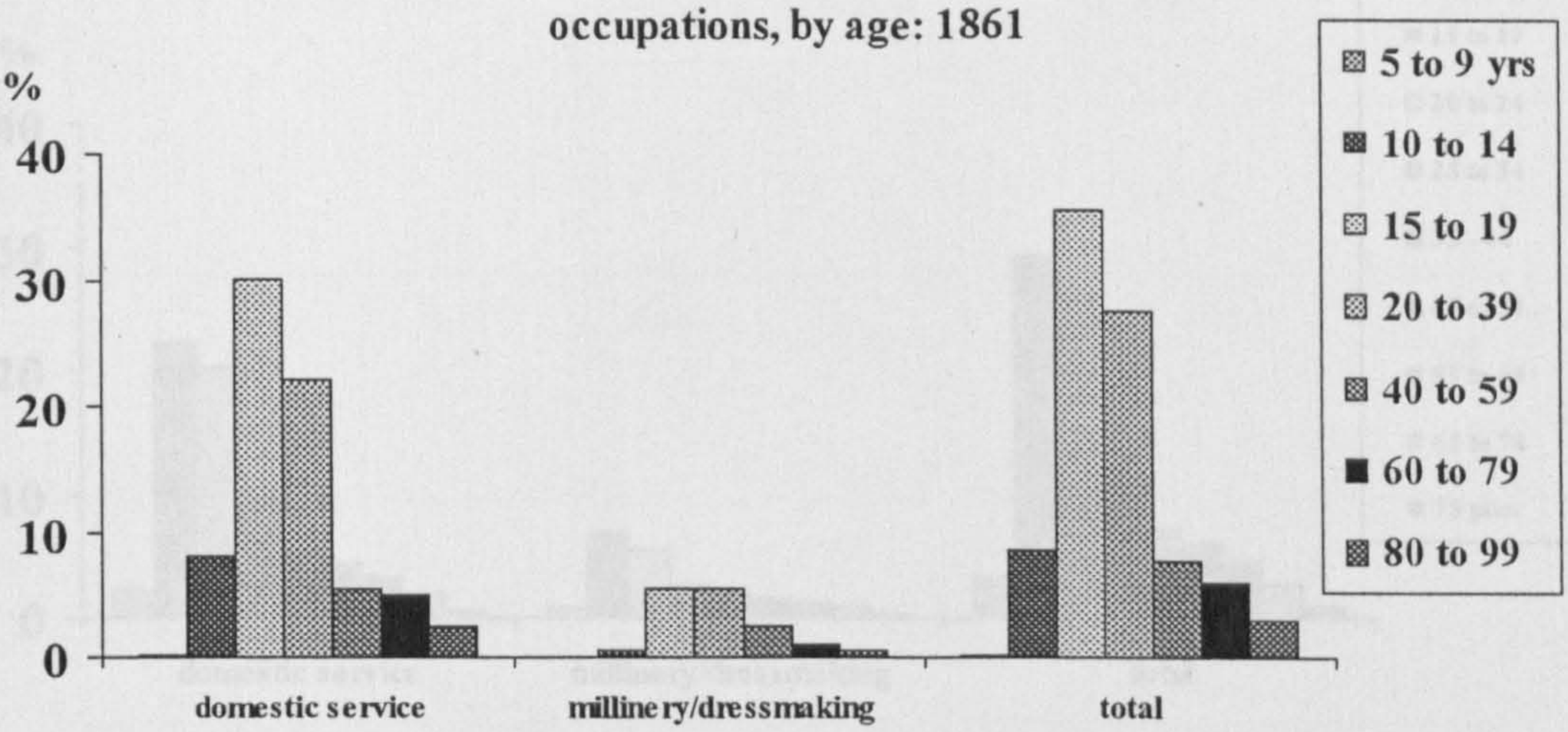
categories: 1) living at home, i.e. those who received no occupational classification, but were merely returned as wife, daughter etc; 2) living at home or in lodgings, i.e. those who worked in the textile trades or other trades which did not provide accommodation; 3) living-in, i.e. those who worked in domestic service or as milliners or dress-makers. In order to calculate the percentages in each category at different age groups I have used the tables setting out the age of the population for England and Wales against the tables containing figures on the occupations of females at different periods of age. The returns are not strictly comparable between the two censuses as different age classifications were used, the occupational returns for 1861 included retired people and, as we have seen, nomenclature and instructions changed over the period.

Figure 1. Where women lived: 1861 and 1911



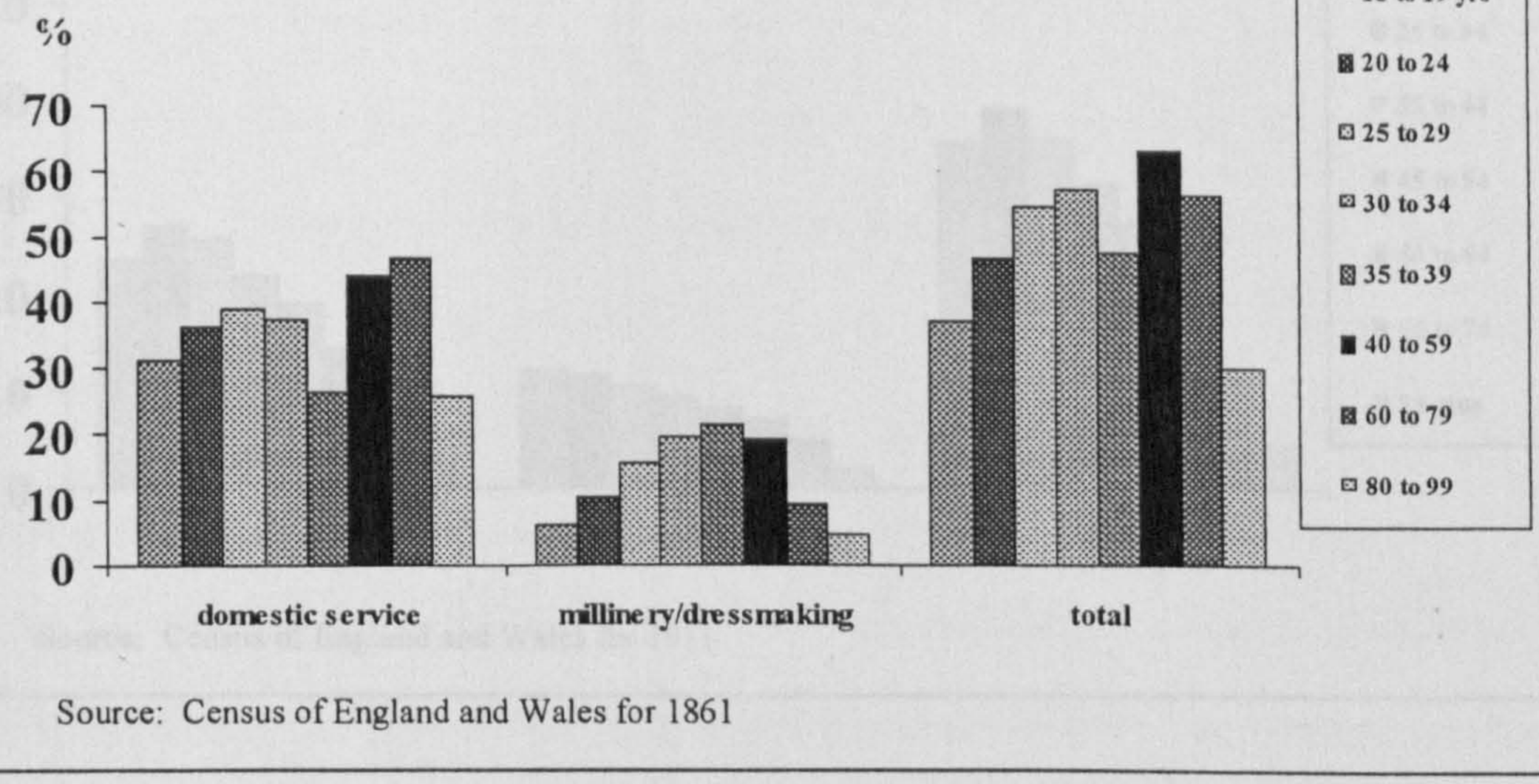
Sources: Censuses of England and Wales for 1861 and 1911

Figure 2. Percentage of total female population employed in living-in occupations, by age: 1861



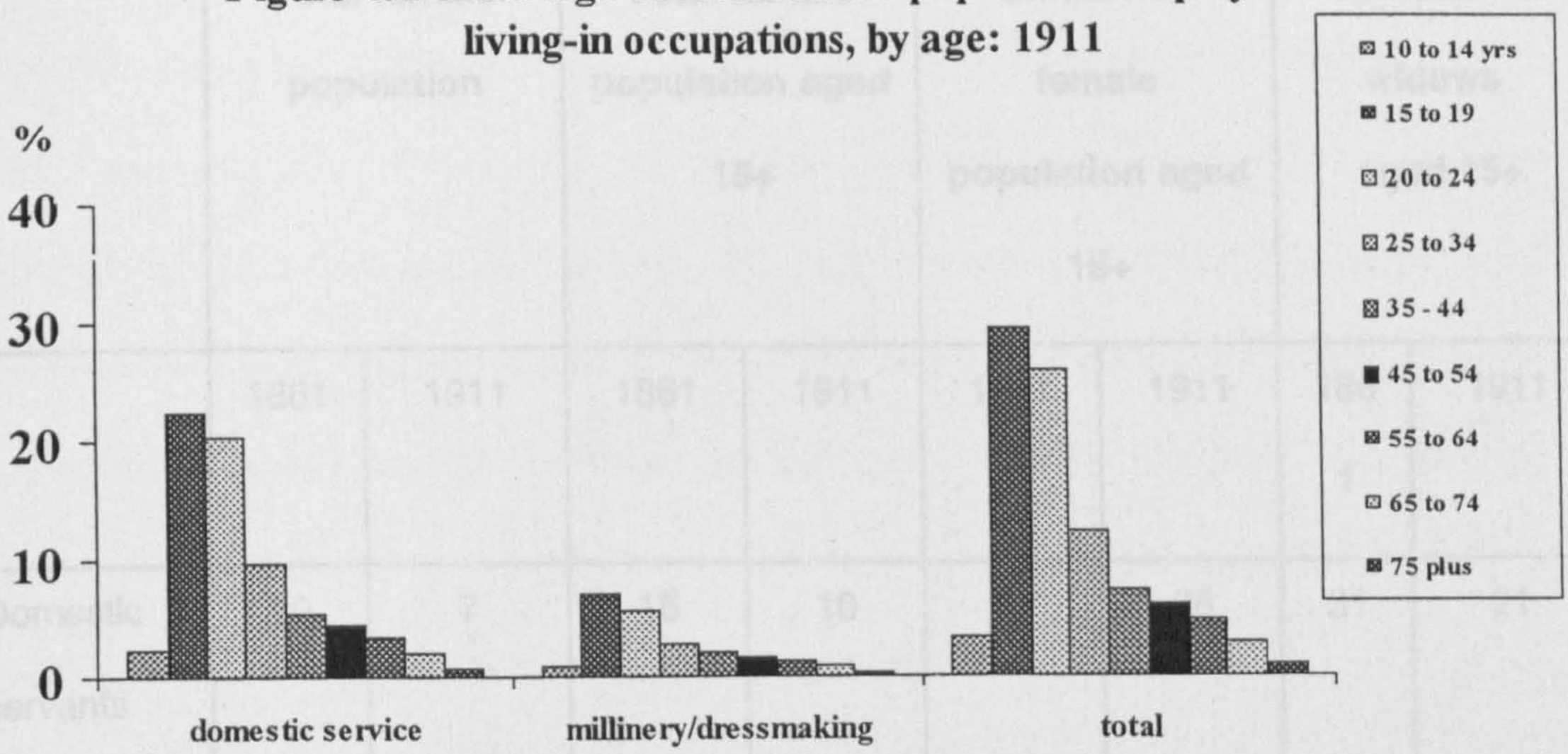
Source: Census of England and Wales for 1861

Figure 3. Percentage of unmarried female population employed in living-in occupations, by age: 1861



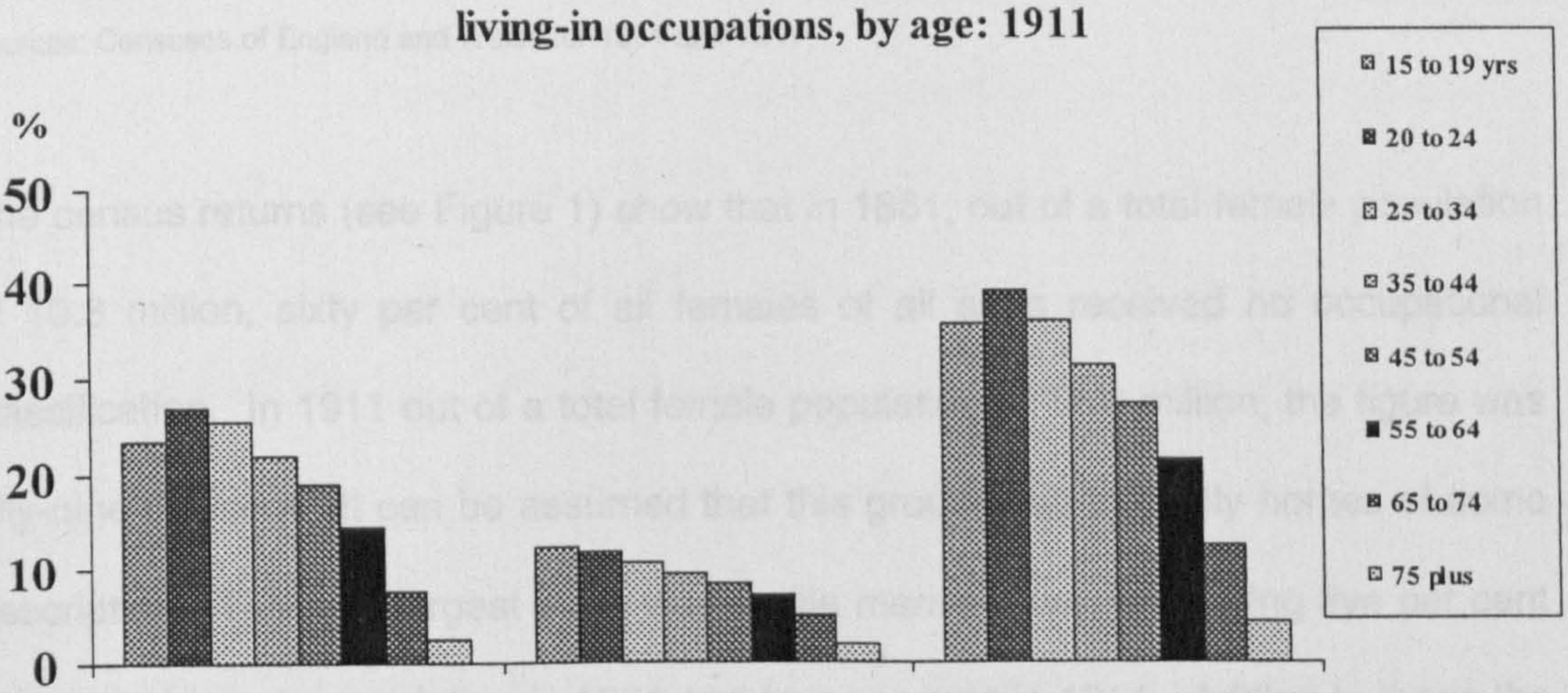
Source: Census of England and Wales for 1861

Figure 4. Percentage of total female population employed in living-in occupations, by age: 1911



Source: Census of England and Wales for 1911

Figure 5. Percentage of unmarried female population employed in living-in occupations, by age: 1911



Source: Census of England and Wales for 1911

Table 1: Female live-in workers as a proportion of the female population 1861 & 1911

	% Total female population		% Total female population aged 15+		% Unmarried female population aged 15+		% spinsters & widows aged 15+	
	1861	1911	1861	1911	1861	1911	186 1	1911
Domestic servants	10	7	15	10	41	26	31	21
Milliners/ dressmakers	3	2	4	3	12	8	9	6
Total	**13**	**9**	**19**	**13**	**53**	**34**	**40**	**27**

Sources: Censuses of England and Wales for 1961 and 1911

The census returns (see Figure 1) show that in 1861, out of a total female population of 10.3 million, sixty per cent of all females of all ages received no occupational classification. In 1911 out of a total female population of 18.6 million, the figure was fifty-nine per cent. It can be assumed that this group lived in family homes of some description. The next largest trade was textile manufacture, employing five per cent of the total female population in 1861 and four per cent in 1911. Adding to these the figures for all those employed in trades other than the living-in ones, the proportions rise to seventeen per cent in 1861 and fifteen per cent in 1911. We can assume that women in these groups lived in their family homes or in lodgings.

Of the proportion of the female population who were returned under occupational headings, the majority at both counts were employed as domestic servants, ten per cent of the total female population in 1861 and seven per cent in 1911 (see Table 1). This figure becomes higher when calculated as a percentage of the female population aged fifteen and over: fifteen per cent in 1861 and ten per cent in 1911, and much higher when calculated as a percentage of the adult unmarried female population aged fifteen and over: forty-one percent in 1861 and twenty six percent in 1911. Dress-making and millinery represented three per cent of the total female population in 1861 and two per cent in 1911, rising to twelve per cent and eight per cent respectively of the adult single female population for these years.

By far the largest category of housing for single working women then was that of living-in accommodation at both the beginning and end of the period. The proportions involved were high - thirteen per cent of the entire female population in 1861, and nine per cent in 1911, rising to fifty-three percent and thirty-four per cent respectively of the adult single female population, (forty per cent and twenty-seven per cent of the spinster and widow population). In other words, in 1861 approximately one in eight of all women of all ages lived in accommodation tied to their work, and one in two of all unmarried women over the age of fifteen and in 1911 one in eleven of all women and one in three of unmarried women. And this is disregarding the number of women living-in in the shop-trade as reliable figures cannot be given for these.

Detailed breakdowns of the figures show that at certain age groups the proportions employed were higher than others (see Figures 2-5). The bulk of live-in workers were in the age group 15-25. In 1861 thirty-five per cent of the female population in the 15 to 19 age group were employed in the live-in trades, and in 1911 twenty-eight per cent

in the 15 to 25 age group were so employed. After this, when most women married, numbers fell off sharply. By contrast, the proportions of unmarried women in higher age groups engaged in domestic service rose dramatically in 1861 to sixty-three per cent of the group aged 40 to 59, and in 1911 remained fairly constant at twenty-seven per cent for the group aged 45-54. A large part of this difference can be accounted for by the inclusion of retired people under occupational headings in 1861, and their separation in 1911.

It is evident from these figures that women's housing position changed somewhat over the period. Demographic changes had an effect: there was a fall in the death rate and the age of marriage rose.[44] The ongoing transformation of Britain from a rural and agricultural society to an urban and industrial one, brought more women workers into towns and into manufacturing and commercial occupations. The growth of the middle classes in the first half of the nineteenth century meant an increased demand for female domestic servants,[45] but the fall in average family size later in the period curtailed this demand and we see a relative falling off in the number of women in service. The last quarter of the nineteenth century also saw an increase in employment opportunities for young single women in areas other than domestic service - teaching, nursing, commerce and office work. The percentage of commercial and business clerks who were female, for example, rose from 0.5% in 1861 to 24% in 1911[46] - virtually a fifty-fold increase in fifty years. As unmarried middle class women began to leave home and to move into independent flats and residential clubs, this meant a very different living experience for them. Census returns for 1911 showed a rise of over half a million in the number of employed single women in the ten years since 1901, and the census report commented that probably a large part of the increase represented a real extension of female employment rather than an artefact of the change in recording procedures for that year.[47] Technological changes meant that more women were

employed in places of business outside the home and there was a reduction over the period of those women, particularly in dress-making and millinery, returned as working on their own account.[48]

Legislative changes also had an effect. The introduction of old age pensions in 1908 and National Insurance in 1911 made a difference to people's housing situation as they meant that less had to resort to the workhouse in old age or sickness. At the other end of the age scale, the introduction of compulsory education for children up to the age of ten in 1870 and the raising of the school-leaving age to fourteen over the period meant that children were not found in living-in situations in such great numbers at the end of the period as at the beginning.[49] Even given all these changes, census figures show that the employment situation remained the same for most working-class women throughout the period - domestic service, the textile trades and dress work. This meant that most single women continued to be employed in living-in situations. The next question to consider is what, in housing terms, did the experience of living-in entail?

THE LIVING-IN SYSTEM

For qualitative rather than quantitative information we have to turn to sources other than the census. There were a number of official reports and inquiries in the period which, while not being chiefly concerned with the question of where single women lived, touched upon various aspects of it. The 1884 Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes, for example, dealt primarily with the housing conditions of working-class families, but it did not ignore the situation of single women. As we have seen it heard evidence on the plight of widowed and deserted mothers struggling to survive in a harsh economic climate and also looked, with disapproval, at the practice of young single women living independently in lodgings. There were Government reports on employment in various trades which discussed the question of accommodation. The

Children's Employment Commission of 1864, for example, investigated the living conditions of dress-workers, (patronisingly, but usefully, women were included under the heading of children). In 1899 Clara Collet carried out an investigation for the Board of Trade, *The Money Wages of Indoor Domestic Servants*.[50] This was based upon a sample of 2,067 households, and, in addition to information on wages, it also provides details on conditions of service. The Interdepartmental Committee on the Truck Acts appointed in 1906 heard a great deal of evidence on shop work and the living conditions of shop assistants from among others, representatives of the National Union of Shop Assistants, individual shop workers, and employers. Social investigators, such as Charles Booth and William Booth also commented on the housing conditions of single women in their investigations into poverty in London in the 1880s and 90s. There is little testimony from those most directly affected, but John Burnett's collection of working-class autobiographies[51] includes accounts of women who had worked as domestic servants in the period.

These sources all provide a great deal of incidental information on the housing problems facing single women, but it was not until the Edwardian period that any concerted attention was paid to the question of women's housing. In 1910 Mary Higgs and Edward Hayward published a study, *Where shall she live? The housing of the woman worker*.[52] They were partly prompted, they said, by 'the entire lack of literature on the subject'[53] and they set out to fill that gap by describing 'the home of the women workers from the residential club of the woman engaged in some form of professional occupation to the one room of the "sweated worker"'.[54]

Among the secondary literature, the work of Pamela Horne[55] and Leonore Davidoff[56] on domestic servants in the Victorian period, of Christine Walkley on women employed

in the dress trade[57] and of Wilfred Whitaker[58] on conditions in the shop-trade, has proved particularly useful.

THE LIVING-IN TRADES

In the next section I intend to discuss conditions in the living-in trades and to outline some of the advantages and disadvantages associated with them, beginning with domestic service as the largest occupational grouping. It is worth noting that while there were significant differences between conditions in these trades, there were also certain features that were common to all of them. Long hours, hard physical work and low pay applied across the board, as they did in most working-class occupations, but unlike employees in other trades, live-in workers could not escape their place of work at the end of the day. Accommodation was often cramped and basic - attic bedrooms for domestic servants and shared dormitories for dress-workers and shop assistants - and few other facilities were provided for them. It was not the physical aspect of housing, however, which was the major disadvantage of living-in - as we have seen most members of the working classes lived in substandard housing - what was more cogent was the fact that there was no separation between their place of work and their home, and the constant factor of insecurity which this involved. Workers could be summarily dismissed and losing a place had dire consequences as it also meant losing the roof over their heads. This left single women in a very vulnerable position and it is the major defining feature of the living-in system. Women working in these trades had little protection against arbitrary dismissal, or exploitative or abusive employers. The nature of domestic service in particular, entailed living in close proximity with employers, encouraged deferential attitudes and isolated women in separate households. Apart from the shop-trade, where equal numbers of men were employed, there was little union organization. The situation of live-in workers was summed up in a statement made in 1853:

> The majority of women living in as employees put up with bad conditions and insufficient money rather than give up a job which would mean that she had nowhere to live and insufficient money to obtain other lodgings while seeking fresh employment.[59]

This basic condition applied to all live-in workers, and while it is important to remember that not all of them were badly treated or miserable in their positions, there was no escaping the fact that their housing was dependent upon employment.

DOMESTIC SERVICE

Domestic service was the largest of all the live-in trades. By 1901, it was not only the largest employer of women, but with a total labour force of over 1,748,954, it was the largest single industry for either men or women.[60] The great numbers of women involved, the fact that it was predominantly a female occupation and the almost universal experience of living in, apart from the small proportion of day servants,[61] makes domestic service an exemplar of the housing situation of single working women in the period. It was almost exclusively a working-class occupation and with the exception of factory work was at the bottom of the occupational hierarchy for women. Most domestic servants came from poor working-class families, or from the workhouse, and service had distinct advantages in that it provided a higher material standard of living than most young working girls experienced in their own family homes. It also offered wages, albeit low,[62] free board and lodging, gifts from employers and trades-people and perks of various kinds.[63] Set against this were the very long hours and hard physical work which domestic service involved, and the constant factor of insecurity associated with living-in positions.

The common pattern was for girls to leave their homes and go into service in their mid-teens and to work for about ten years before marriage. Domestic service was supposed to give girls a sheltered environment and a training in the sorts of domestic skills they

would need as wives and as such was seen by members of the middle and upper classes - the employing classes - as the ideal employment for young women. However, this was in sharp contrast to the marked reluctance of women themselves to enter it where any alternatives existed, and it is important to examine the reasons why this might have been. The question of what became of servants who did not marry, and those who became too old to work, is also central to the situation of domestic servants.

It is important to remember that domestic service was not a uniform occupation. Servants worked in a variety of places, from small family households to very large aristocratic households, and they were also employed in commercial establishments, such as hotels and shops, and in institutions, such as hospitals and schools.[64] A large number of women were employed as farm servants, and here they worked in the dairy as well as the house, but it is the situation of the indoor family servant, the largest category of servant, which I will focus upon in this section. This category encompassed a range of different positions and Clara Collet distinguishes thirteen, beginning with between maid at the bottom, earning on average £10 7s a year, and rising to housekeeper at the top, earning £45 a year, (see Appendix 10).

The size of the household in which a servant was employed played a major part in determining the experience of service. This could vary from a family which employed a single-handed maid-of-all-work - a slavey - to very large establishments employing small armies of servants.[65] In a large household it was possible for a domestic servant to improve her situation and work her way up the hierarchy from the position of between maid at the bottom to that of housekeeper at the top. As a housekeeper she would have her own sitting room in addition to bedroom, servants to wait on her and considerable authority within the household. Service in the upper echelons of society also offered the prestige associated with the employing family and a much more

interesting experience. Life could involve balls, receptions, dinners, (although in rather a different capacity from the guests), and, for personal servants, movement between town and country houses, and possibly foreign travel.[66] There was also the social life of the servants' hall and contact with the servants of visiting guests. No doubt the life of a junior maid in such an establishment could have been made miserable by bullying senior servants, but at least there was the company of other servants and the possibility of advancement. Such large households were the exception however. According to Pamela Horne, gentry families generally kept about eight indoor servants and middle class professional families on average three.[67] Most households employed only one servant[68] - a maid of all work - and this was a particularly disadvantageous position to be in.

Clara Collet found that as a general rule, servants employed in households which kept only one or two servants rarely passed into larger households.[69] If such a girl did not marry, she had little hope of advancement or even of continued employment in service:

> The rough-mannered servant girl accustomed to service with rough-mannered employers has little before her as she grows older. As soon as she reaches an age when she wants more than a very small sum in wages, she is displaced and replaced by another young girl. Her previous experience is against her amongst mistresses looking for older servants.....This class of girls in very few years disappear from the ranks of domestic service, and in doing so, is generally in a worse position than the factory girl in the same grade.[70]

This was particularly telling for the vast army of ex-workhouse girls, and girls from orphanages, who were sent into service with households looking for the cheapest servants. Seebohm Rowntree, in his survey of York in 1899, found that the lowest level of domestic servant was the thirteen year old skivvy recruited from the local workhouse at a wage of one shilling a week.[71]

The position of maid of all work could also be a very lonely one, especially for a young girl in her first position. Most servants went into service away from their home neighbourhoods and with no fellow servants in the household, they could find themselves with no one to speak to day after day, but their mistress and tradesmen. The bleakness of such a situation is illustrated by the account given by a maid of all work in 1874 of her first position after she left the workhouse. 'They wasn't particularly kind', she said, 'I had to do all the work. I had no one to go to: oh! I cried the first night, I used to cry so....I had always slept in a ward full of other girls, and there I was all alone'.[72] Such experiences illustrate the barrenness in terms of human contact which many servants experienced. Their rooms were also barren of comfort as the following description of farm maids' bedrooms in 1890 shows:

> Maids' rooms were allus at the very top, at the back on the north side o' the house. There were nothing in them but a bed with a hard old flock mattress, a table by the side of it, and the tin trunk the girl had brought her clothes in.[73]

Although such women were housed and fed, there is no sense in which such accommodation could be called a 'home' for them.

Living-in represented the greatest convenience for employers as they had their servants on call round the clock, but the greatest inconvenience for employees who had little time off and no home of their own to retreat to in their off-duty hours. Lilian Westhall, a young woman who worked as a general servant in several households, recorded that in one position she worked from six in the morning until 11 o'clock at night',[74] and that in another, 'I had one evening off a week, and one day off a month'.[75] The little time off allowed meant that servants were virtually confined to the house. Visitors, if allowed, were strictly monitored; Clara Collet records 'that in a few instances it is stated that the servant may receive her friends one evening a week',[76] and from this it can be inferred that most servants were not allowed this privilege.

Living-in as a domestic servant also meant that every element of one's life was overseen and the interest which conscientious mistresses took in their servants' moral welfare, while it may have been kindly intended, meant continual surveillance and supervision. Leonore Davidoff comments that the experience of supervision and control marked every stage of a working-class woman's life, in that they went from parental control as children, to the control of employers in service and then to the control of their husbands in marriage and that their situation could be summed up as 'mastered for life'.[77] Servants were relegated to a child-like position in the household, and even with a benevolent employer, life was very constrained.

Benevolence was by no means guaranteed, however. The fact that the practice of keeping servants was universal in all classes above the working class meant that employers must have encompassed the gamut of human behaviour, from kindness and consideration to indifference and harshness. The servant who was fortunate in her mistress could have enjoyed a fairly happy situation, and there are accounts of affectionate relationships between mistresses and maids. Harriet Martineau, for example, who lived alone with her maids, took a warm interest in their lives,[78] and famously, Elizabeth Barrett was helped by her maid Wilson when she eloped with Robert Browning. Servants could also grow fond of their employers; Winifred Griffiths, a housemaid for four years between 1911 and 1914, wrote that when she left her position for war-work that, she felt sorrow at leaving the family and, 'especially did I regret leaving my little home in the tower'.[79] This latter comment is interesting as it illustrates that a 'home' could be made in domestic service if the emotional setting was right.

Such positive experiences may not have been unusual, but at the other end of the scale, brutality and ill-treatment were not unknown and Pamela Horne records several examples of this. In 1897, for example, Emily Jane Popejoy, a servant girl, was found

to have died of maltreatment and starvation at the hands of her employers.[80] There are also accounts in the *Domestic Servants Journal* of 1913 of teenage domestic servants being beaten by their employers and deprived of food or of wages.[81] Such harsh treatment was probably rare, but it demonstrates the vulnerability of servants to abusive employers and the fact that such abuse could effectively be concealed within private households.

There were also sexual dangers for young women in domestic service. According to Joan Perkin 'the Victorian middle class home, with its attics, basements and backstairs, was an ideal location for rape and seduction.'[82] It is difficult to know how common rape and seduction of servants was, but as Leonore Davidoff points out, there were obvious sexual overtones in households which contained young women servants and middle class male adolescents.[83] Two of the women included in John Burnett's collection record instances of what today would be called sexual harassment. Lilian Westall wrote of 'the nineteen year old son of the mistress, who thought me fair game and kept trying to corner me in the bedroom',[84] and Lucy Luck, writing of her master, said, 'that man, who had a wife and was a father to three small children, did all he could, time after time, to try and ruin me. It was impossible to stay where he was.....'[85]

Where rape or seduction did take place, and pregnancy was the result, it was unlikely that the word of the servant would be taken against the master or son of the household, and she was liable to summary dismissal. This was also the fate of the servant made pregnant, not by her master, but by a man of her own social class which, as Gillis shows in his study of servants and illegitimacy in nineteenth century London, was the more common situation.[86] Punitive employers were likely to exacerbate the situation, by preventing the servant from seeing the man concerned and subsequently dismissing her. The consequences of this was not only loss of employment, but simultaneous loss

of housing - and in shame and disgrace. Martha Vicinus points out that 'the double standard and the stern unforgiving attitudes towards unwed motherhood frequently left no other choice to a woman but to sell herself on the street'.[87] Not all such women became prostitutes, but an unmarried mother was unlikely to find an employer who would take her on as a servant. If she kept the child she would have to find lodgings and support herself and her child by scraping a living in various poorly paid forms of casual work.[88]

Apart from the dangers of seduction or rape, servants were also liable to summary dismissal, for what were sometimes very trivial reasons. Hannah Cullwick, for example, recorded in her memoirs that at the age of fifteen she was dismissed from one situation, for playing.[89] William Booth listed various circumstances which could result in the arbitrary loss of employment for domestic servants, including, 'a quarrel with the mistress....a long bout of disease and dismissal penniless from the hospital, a robbery of a purse'. [90] The consequences of such a dismissal could be dire. In an era of little welfare provision, the servant out of a place was in a very precarious position. If she was dismissed without a character, she was extremely unlikely to be able to obtain another position. An anonymous London district visitor said in the 1870s, 'no one till they have tried can tell the difficulty there is in finding work for a girl who has lost her character'.[91] Returning home was not an option for most as their own families were unlikely to be able to house or keep them.[92] Shame at losing a position may also have prevented girls from returning home and for servants who came from the workhouse, as very many did, there was no family or home to return to.

Older women also faced great insecurity. Domestic service was an occupation which offered no training for anything else but marriage, and if a woman did not marry, there was little hope of her finding employment elsewhere. According to evidence given to

the Royal Commission on the Aged Poor in 1893, no one would employ a servant 'past fifty years of age and accordingly, almost by the necessity of the case, they will have to go to the workhouse'.[93] Living in service all one's life meant that there was no home to retire to, and unless generous employers provided a pension or found a home for their ex-servants, there would be no alternative but the workhouse once they became physically unable to work. Figures on the occupations of workhouse inmates show that both in 1861 and in 1911 domestic servants were by far the largest category there.[94] The passing of the Old Age Pension Act in 1908 may have made a difference to some of these women, but the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws found that for domestic servants who were single, and never had a home of their own, the common fate was the workhouse when they could no longer work.[95]

Despite these disadvantages, domestic service was held by many to be the ideal occupation for working-class girls. 'Finding a good place for a girl is the best thing a district visitor can do for her'[96] was a common attitude. Edward Hayward, writing in 1910, said of domestic service:

> It gives the girl who, perhaps, comes from quite a rough home, an insight into a well-ordered and comfortable household, a unit of which household she becomes.....She has the moral advantage of coming into close and often-times really friendly contact with a woman who has had better opportunities than herself, and who, therefore, it is to be hoped, has much to teach her.[97]

This was an optimistic view of domestic service in which the element of moral supervision was held to be of the utmost importance. This was the goal of nearly all of the welfare organizations working with women at the time, much of whose work was centred around training young women for domestic service. Most of the people involved in these welfare organizations were of the servant-keeping classes themselves, and it was in their interests to hold up domestic service as the apogee of attainment for

young women. However, given the paucity of alternatives for young working women, it could also be seen as a realistic strategy.

Whatever the attitudes of the middle classes towards service, something which it was unlikely that they or their daughters would ever be reduced to, it is clear that it was not a popular occupation among young women. When the Women's Industrial Council carried out an inquiry into the conditions of domestic service in 1913, one of the questions asked was, 'Would you advise any young friend to go into service? If not why not?' The answers they received provided, they said:

> An unequivocal condemnation of our whole system of household organization'.....From these varying social levels the answer returned is clear, decisive and for the most part, reasoned: the profession is felt to be undesirable, if not repulsive under its present conditions.[98]

The only weapon which domestic servants possessed was that of changing position and this was frequently resorted to. Clara Collet said that above the one servant class, the mass of servants and mistresses were perpetually playing at "general post" with each other[99] and she found that the average length of service completed in households in her survey was about three years with the great majority having served less than this.[100]

The most striking and incontrovertible evidence of the unpopularity of domestic service is provided by the figures which show where alternative employment was available, women voted with their feet and went into factories and mills, rather than service.[101] Living in lodgings or rooms may have entailed extra expenditure on rent and food which servants did not incur, but it also provided a degree of freedom which servants could not aspire to. As other employment options opened up for them towards the end of the nineteenth century, the proportion of women in domestic service declined. Whereas in 1881 there were 218 domestic servants per thousand families by 1911 this had fallen

to 170.[102] The report of the 1911 census attributed this falling off to the 'increased disinclination on the part of young women to enter indoor domestic service'.[103]

What is particularly significant about domestic service in this period is that it was the experience of so large a proportion of the female population. In terms of housing this meant that millions of women had no home of their own and no housing security. For many it was a brief interlude in their lives before they embarked on marriage, but for those who did not marry, it meant a life lived in other people's households, and for many, a final decline into the workhouse. As we have seen the experience involved varied greatly, from that of the single-handed skivvy in a small household, to that of being part of a large and aristocratic establishment. The arbitrary nature of employers meant that servants could experience kindness and consideration at one end of the spectrum and brutality, ill-treatment and sexual abuse at the other. They could also be summarily discharged and put out on the streets for sometimes minor offences. Evidence shows that for many of the women involved, domestic service was entered into because there was no other choice.

THE DRESS TRADE

The other major living-in trade for women in the period was the dress trade. Employment in millinery and dress-making was considered a cut above domestic service, but the living conditions involved were often worse, as we shall see, than those experienced in domestic service, and it entailed all the same disadvantages in terms of housing insecurity.

Dress-work attracted women from a broader class background than did domestic service. As Christine Walkely points out, all Victorian and Edwardian little girls were taught to sew, whatever their social class, and it was the only qualification for earning

a living which many girls possessed.[104] Although it entailed working for a living, something which was not compatible with the status of a lady, it was considered a more 'genteel' occupation than either domestic service or factory work.[105] Sweated workers, and 'slop' workers at the bottom of the dress trade, were among the poorest members of the working classes, but the larger dress-making and millinery establishments attracted women from further up the social scale. In the fashionable London houses, according to Joan Perkin, the workers included 'the daughters of clergymen, half-pay officers and professionals'.[106] Outside the top London houses, the bulk of girls entering the dress-trade were of the working or lower middle classes, 'the daughters of tradesmen or of the poor'.[107]

Unlike most other women's occupations, dress work provided a system of apprenticeship with progression through the stages of improver, third, second and first hand, to the positions of superintendent and instructor, and for some, the eventual possibility of running their own business.[108] It had attractions for women as a means of earning a living as it had a recognised structure of training in an area of work in which most young women were interested - fashion. However, the reality of the work, and the conditions involved, were far from glamorous. In 1863 an anonymous worker wrote of her experiences at 'Madame Elise' of Regent Street:

> We are called in the morning at half-past 6, and in ordinary times we work until 11 at night, but occasionally our hours are much longer; on the Friday before the last Drawing Room, we worked all night, and did not leave off until 9 o'clock on Saturday morning....At night we retire to rest in a room divided into little cells, each just big enough to contain two beds. There are two of us in each bed. There is no ventilation; I could scarcely breath when I first came from the country.[109]

This was no back street workshop, but a large West End establishment, employing some fifty workers. There are a number of other accounts which testify to the poor conditions in which dress workers lived. The Children's Employment Commission of

1864 found ten people sleeping in one room with only one window in one establishement, and five girls sharing one bed in an attic in another.[110] Another witness to the Commission testified of a house which she had to leave through ill-health that, 'the bedrooms were shocking, in the height of the season three sleep in a bed; one bedroom was so damp that the water would run down the walls'.[111]

The living conditions described here were worse than those experienced by many domestic servants. I have not found accounts of physical violence and brutality towards dress workers that occurred in domestic service, but the conditions of work alone could be said to amount to a form of physical abuse. Dress workers were prone to health problems, especially eye, pulmonary, digestive and uterine complaints [112] and it is clear that while the nature of the work may have precipitated these diseases, the cramped and unhealthy accommodation in which they lived exacerbated them. Sharing a bed, for example, was a clear route for the spread of disease. Miss Bramwell, superintendent of a hostel for dressmakers, urged in her evidence to the Children's Employment Commission of 1864 that employees should be provided with a bed to themselves, citing the experience of some girls she knew of having to sleep with women 'suffering from a loathsome disease'.[113] Sharing beds was not uncommon, even for young women of the middle classes, as the large families of the period sometimes necessitated this, but sharing a bed with a sister was a different proposition from sleeping with a stranger. Miss Bramwell went on to say, 'I cannot describe to you the sense of pollution which some of the young ones have shown in telling me of the character of their bedfellows'.[114] Possibly this is an oblique reference to unwelcome sexual advances.

Even where one's fellow workers were not of bad character or suffering from a 'loathsome disease', the degree of enforced association involved in living-in in the dress

trade must have been oppressive at times. Workers spent all their waking and sleeping moments in the company of their fellow workers - something which was the mirror image of the isolation experienced by the single servant. The communal living arrangements in the larger dress-making establishments meant that women were less vulnerable to sexual abuse by employers, but presumably in houses shared with the proprietor's family, this was a possibility. The poor wages and conditions also drove a number of dress-makers into prostitution,[115] and pregnancy held all the consequences for the unmarried dress-worker as it did for the domestic servant.

Like domestic servants, dress-workers experienced all the disadvantages of living in a household which was not their own and in which they were in a subordinate position. They were confined to the less comfortable parts of the establishment, were unable to receive friends and were under the constant supervision of their employers. They were also subject to a number of arbitrary rules. A witness to the 1906 Truck Acts Committee stated that 'a certain West End dress-maker fines her girls if they come down stairs in couples. On what grounds I do not know at all. They must come down one by one; they are not to come down in twos'.[116]

There were also strict rules about coming-in times and workers could be summarily dismissed for returning late. Miss Bramwell exhorted employers:

> Not to close their doors on a girl who comes back after hours. Let them dismiss her next morning if they please, but if they only knew how many falls are due to nothing more than missing a train or an omnibus they would alter this. [117]

The consequences of such a dismissal, as Miss Bramwell implied, could be dire. Not only was the worker out on the streets for the night, she also lost her accommodation along with her job. Poorly paid young dress-workers were unlikely to be able to save enough out of their earnings to guard against the possibility of homelessness and,

unless able to return to their parental home, were faced with all the same consequences of sudden dismissal as domestic servants in such circumstances.

A major difference from domestic service was that workers had one fixed day off a week, Sunday, but this was something of a mixed blessing as they were often shut out from their accommodation for the day, whether they had anywhere to go or not. For girls and young women away from home for the first time, in a town where they were unlikely to know anyone, this could be a miserable experience. Miss Bramwell related:

> One poor girl..... told me that on her first Sunday in London she asked her employer, in whose house she resided, what she was to do, as she had no friends to go to in London, and he only said, "Go to the devil if you like; I can't be bothered all day with you." So for that day she went to Church, and wandered about the park all day. The next two Sundays were wet; she had no money, as her salary was paid quarterly; so she went without food from breakfast to tea-time, and had to sit under the trees in the park to keep herself dry.[118]

While it was advantageous for employers to have their workers under their eye during the working week, on Sundays it seems, they did not want the bother of providing food or heating for them.

It is clear then, that the experience of living in as a dress worker differed in a number of ways from that of domestic service - instead of enforced isolation there was the unremitting communality of shared dormitories and instead of the constant supervision of the mistress, there was the physical shutting out of the house on the day off. However, all the disadvantages of the living-in system applied with equal force - petty rules and regulations, constraints upon freedom, the arbitrary nature of employers and, above all, the powerlessness and insecurity involved in living in accommodation tied to work.

SHOP ASSISTANTS

The other major living-in occupation for women was shop work. This was considered to be more genteel than either domestic service or dress work and Gertrude Tuckwell wrote in 1980 that shop assistants were 'amongst the aristocracy of labour'.[119] However, in sharp contrast to this, the editor of *The Shop Assistant* stated, 'the girls at a world-famous establishment in London are 'dossed' - it is the most expressive word I can think of to convey a clear idea of their sleeping quarters'.[120] Despite the higher status of shop work, it appears that it too involved living in substandard accommodation and, as we shall see, all the complaints of the living-in system for dress-makers could be applied to those living in shops - overcrowded and cheerless accommodation, strict rules, the practice of shutting out workers who came in late and of shutting them out of their accommodation on Sundays.

Wilfred B Whitaker in his history of shop work writes that the living in system was 'the natural development of the old apprenticeship system where the apprentice was one of the master's family'.[121] In this sense it had much in common with the dress trade and in the early part of the nineteenth century female shop assistants were likely to be employed in small family run establishments, generally drapers' shops. These were to be found in all provincial towns, large and small, but the development of department stores from the mid-century on meant concentrations of employment in the larger cities, particularly in London.[122] This entailed a very different kind of experience for workers since, from living as a member of the family, shop assistants became members of a large workforce and were accommodated in dormitories, usually on the shop premises, but sometimes in nearby hostels.

As in most in most women's trades, hours were long and wages were low. Typical cases presented to the Truck Committee show shop assistants working a seventy-six

hour week with hours stretching from 8 am to 11 or 12 pm on Fridays and Saturdays.[123] Renumeration for this exhausting working week was low. Margaret Bondfield, a representative of the National Union of Shop Assistants, (and later Britain's first woman cabinet minister) said in her evidence to the Truck Committee in 1906 that the female shop assistant's wage, apart from the living-in element, was 'practically less than ten shillings a week; it is £25 a year'.[124] Under the truck system, workers were forced to receive some of their salary in the form of room and board and it also appears that in some establishments, following the apprenticeship model, 'improvers' received no wages at all, but only their board and lodging.[125]

The living conditions of shop assistants do not appear to have been much better than those reported for the dress trade. The Truck Committee heard evidence that the board and lodging accommodation provided was 'often inferior and inadequate'.[126] Examples were given of poor ventilation, shared beds, crowded rooms, beds infested with bugs and rat-infested dormitories.[127] Even where conditions were better, the bedrooms tended to be impersonal at best. Clementina Black wrote of the female shopworker, 'the dormitory in which she occupies a place is bare and unhomelike, all the beds, chairs and chests-of-drawers of the same pattern; the walls unadorned, for the decoration of them is forbidden'.[128]

There were strict rules and if they broke them, workers were liable to fines, taken out of their wages. Examples given to the Truck Committee of the regimes in shops list numerous rules and regulations. One establishment, for example, had 123 rules, a considerable number of which related to the employees' domestic conduct. Assistants could be fined, 'for entering their bedrooms during business hours, entering the kitchen, standing at street doors to hold conversations with their friends'.[129] Workers' lives were restricted by these rules and one of the complaints made to the Committee was

that there was no privacy and no facilities for seeing friends.[130] Like workers in dress establishments, shop assistants had Sundays off but they too were shut out of the premises for the day. A commentator wrote in 1873:

> For those whose salaries are small, or worse still, for the 'improvers', who have no salary, the Sunday is a dreadful problem.....some walk about the streets, some sit in the public houses. Some can be traced going from church to church to find one which is warmed.[131]

Worse still, workers were also likely to be shut out of their accommodation at night if they came back late. The Truck Committee heard evidence that 'in some cases assistants not returning before the hour of locking up are shut out for the night and that girls so excluded have been known to spend the whole night wandering about the streets'.[132] Assistants were also liable to summary dismissal and, as in other living-in trades, this meant sudden homelessness with all the vulnerability this entailed. The National Vigilance Association made specific links between the living-in system for shop assistants and the white slave traffic. In a pamphlet entitled *In the grip of the white slave trader* they raised the question of how a summarily dismissed girl who came from the country, as many did, was to get back home, and pointed out that the very lack of comfort and amenities in shop-girls' accommodation meant that they were 'driven to the streets for recreation', and hence were prey to procurers. In a condemnation of the living-in system they said:

> Parents naturally imagine that the physical and moral welfare of their daughters will be better looked after by this method than if they were allowed to live in lodgings, '[but] the root of the evil lies in the vexed question of "living-in".[133]

Trade union witnesses to the Truck Committee also alleged that the living-in system was 'conducive to immorality', both because of the practice of shutting young women out at night and because there was no real supervision outside working hours. Supervision, they said, was limited to requiring assistants to be in by a certain time of

night, but no steps were taken to see that they actually were all in. It was also alleged that young women were forced to share accommodation with older women of doubtful character, and Margaret Bondfield said of her early experiences that she was 'put in a room with a woman of mature age who led a life of a most undesirable kind'.[134] There are echoes here of the complaints made about young women sharing beds with women of bad character in the dress trade, and again it is possible that there was a sexual connotation. The emphasis upon the lack of moral supervision made by the trade union witnesses to the Truck Committee may have been the result of genuine concerns, or possibly the use of arguments which they knew would be telling.

Shop work then exposed women to all the restrictions of living in, together with the dangers of sudden dismissal and consequent loss of accommodation, which we have seen in domestic service and the dress trade. It should be pointed out, however, that the Truck Committee also heard evidence from women shop assistants 'in the best houses', that they positively preferred the living-in system:

> The young ladies decidedly prefer to live in: they could not get the same comfort and conveniences in lodgings, nor the same social life. Living-out with parents, relatives or friends would be different, but often a young girl coming up to London knew no one, and life in lodgings would be very comfortless and would expose girls to very serious moral dangers. As regards the protection and supervision afforded under the living-in system, Miss Oliver said that the young girls are in a large measure overlooked: certain people are in charge of them, they have to keep stated hours, and the senior hand take an interest in them. Moreover, when any girl begins to lapse at all, the general consensus of condemnation is a great deterrent.[135]

Here we see a stout defence of the living-in system, and one which was largely based on the supervision which it provided. The question of supervision was raised by both defenders and opponents of the living-in system, not as an intrusion into women's lives but in a taken-for-granted assumption that it was desirable. Possibly supervision might have been appropriate for young girls living away from home for the first time, and for

young women, who perhaps expected to live in for a few years at the most before leaving to marry, the situation may have been tolerable. For older women, however, it must have been irksome.

Edward Hayward pointed out that it was among the unorganized assistants, especially among the women, that support was strongest for the continuation of the living-in system. The majority of workers organized into trade unions were opposed to it.[136] The shop trade was more effectively unionised than the other living-in trades, perhaps because equal numbers of men were employed in it, and three unions were represented at the Truck Committee, but the shorter length of time for which women were employed meant that they were less likely to be organized into unions. 65% of the female assistants were under twenty five as opposed to 49% of the male assistants and this may account for their lack of organization.[137] Joining a union was also forbidden in some establishments. Margaret Bondfield recorded that when, as a young shop assistant, she had decided to join the National Union for Shop Assistants, she had to write after her room-mates were asleep 'knowing that I was committing an offence for which I could be heavily fined'.[138]

One of the major criticisms that the trade union witnesses to the Truck Committee made of the living-in system, was that it 'robs the assistants of their sense of personal responsibility which would be developed by ordering and controlling their own lives: and so individuality and independence are checked'.[139] Further, they pointed out, it also robbed workers of political rights as they lacked the residence qualification to register for the vote.[140] This had worse consequences for the male assistants than the female, as women could not vote in parliamentary elections, but it also deprived women of the local vote. The particular lack of personal responsibility which the union representatives deplored for women was it deprived them of the 'opportunity for training themselves

in those domestic duties which form so necessary a part of the woman worker's life.'[141] This again reflects assumptions - and indeed realities - about women's position and it was a charge which was laid against all women's occupations, apart from domestic service.

The conclusions of the Truck Committee were that although abuses existed within the shop trade, the living conditions were not as bad as portrayed by the union witnesses and that, rather than being abolished, the system should be better regulated. It is clear that a spectrum of conditions existed and that in the better parts of the trade, living-in could be an advantage, especially when one considers the difficulty which women had in finding affordable accommodation. However, it is also clear that in the worst houses the living accommodation was very poor, and that in all establishments life was very regulated and offered little opportunity of independence or of a social life. What the Committee did not address was the fundamental problem of the lack of security which the system entailed and here, as in all living-in trades, women shop assistants were at the mercy of a sudden loss of position and consequent homelessness. The final point which the union representatives made to the Committee encapsulates the problem basic to all the living-in trades:

> There was no freedom of complaint; that if they remonstrated about food, or lodging, they rendered themselves liable to dismissal with the possibility also of the employer "spoiling their reference"'. [142]

CONCLUSIONS

Single working women were in a particularly disadvantaged position in the Victorian and Edwardian housing market. Low wages and lack of suitable housing meant that those women who did not find their accommodation with their work faced great difficulties and lived in the cheapest lodgings and single rooms. As we have seen, living-in was the common experience of the majority of single working women. Virtually

all domestic servants, and a large proportion of dress workers and shop-assistants, lived in their employers' households or in accommodation tied to their work. It is important to remember that living-in was the experience of very many women and so must have seemed ordinary to them, and there is no reason to suppose that all women in living-in positions were miserable. One of the factors which may have made it more bearable was the expectation that it would be for a few years only. Most young women, it is reasonable to assume, expected to marry and looked upon their period of working as an interlude before they set up home for themselves. Although wages were low, the provision of board and lodging allowed women workers to save some money to send home to their parents or towards setting up their own home. For those who were fortunate in their employers, it could be a positive experience. However, many were not so fortunate. As we have seen, domestic servants were the most vulnerable to abuse of various kinds as living in their employer's household meant that illicit sexual attentions and maltreatment could go on undetected. Dress-workers and shop-assistants were more protected from direct physical abuse, but the conditions of work and accommodation were injurious in themselves.

It is only in comparison with the other housing alternatives on offer for working women, that living-in could be seen as a desirable way of living. Long hours and hard physical work were the norm in all working-class occupations and as such were not exceptional; the strict rules, the supervision, the lack of privacy were irksome aspects of the system, but the real problem at the heart of it was the dependence and insecurity it involved and the arbitrary nature of the experience. The experience of living-in depended on the kindliness or otherwise of the employer, and this was a lottery. Girls leaving workhouses were in a particularly vulnerable position as they had nothing to fall back on should their employment situation break down. Some young women were able to change their situations and find better employers, but they could not change the system

which meant that they had to live-in. Older women were probably in the worst position, as unless they managed to acquire skills and gain superior positions, they lost earning power as they grew older, as well as hope of escape through marriage.

Apart from shop-work, women in the occupations which involved living-in lacked union organization, and since they were dependent for their employment on families and small businesses, periodic slumps in the economic cycle meant that they could easily be thrown out of work and hence out of their housing. Tied accommodation may have seemed the appropriate form of provision to employers as it provided them with the cheapest form of labour and the system was primarily a convenience for employers as they had their workforce on hand. It was the interests of the employers which were best served and Margaret Bondfield stated that 'many employers kept the living-in system because they could use their assistants for extra long hours'.[143]

The problem was not recognised as a housing problem as such because the structure of society, which dictated that some women had servants and other women were servants, and that cheap female labour was available in the dress-trade and shops, was so much the norm that it was difficult for contemporaries to question this. Working women were seen only as 'temporary workers' who would marry and leave the workforce, and this, together with the assumption that single women had no dependants to support, led to a standard of wages and accommodation which working men would not tolerate. As June Purvis points out, women were not valued as 'productive' members of society in the same sense as men, [144] and the housing position of women workers in the living-in trades reflects their marginalised position in the economy. They were also effectively concealed within the households of their employers and thus presented no visible problem. These women were not homeless in the sense of lacking a roof over their heads, but the conditions which obtained in these trades meant that

they were very far removed from the concept of a 'home'. Their great insecurity, and the evidence we have seen that women only remained in these situations because they had few other choices, shows that the concept of 'hidden homelessness' was a very relevant one.

To benevolent middle-class women reformers, living-in, particularly in domestic service, seemed the most appropriate form of housing provision because it placed young women under supervision. However, the drawback to the system - that young women between places were effectively homeless and vulnerable to all kinds of exploitation - could not be overlooked. From the 1850s onwards groups of middle and upper-class women responded to this situation by organizing to provide safe lodgings for young women between places. The national network of accommodation lodges which they ran are a testimony to the scale of the housing need of single women in the period and this will be the subject of the next chapter.

NOTES

1. Quoted in Joan Perkin, Victorian women, John Murray (Publishers) Ltd, 1994, p.174

2. In 1861 the percentage of unmarried females aged fifteen and upwards was 37%, (Census of England and Wales, 1861, PP 1863, Vol. XXXV Cd 8941, p.118-9) and in 1911 the percentage of unmarried females aged twenty and upwards was 30%, (Census of England and Wales, 1911, PP 1917-18 Cd 8491, XXXV, 483, p.89)

3. See, for example, L Holcombe, Victorian ladies at work: middle class working women in England and Wales, David & Charles, 1973, H Bradley, Men's work, women's work: a sociological history of the sexual division of labour in employment, Oxford University Press, 1980, L Tilly & J Scott, Women, work and the family, Routledge, 1989

4. In 1861, for example, 86,551 girls under the age of 15 were employed as domestic servants in England and Wales, (Census of England and Wales, 1861, PP 1863 (3221) LIII, I, p.lxi)

5. In 1911 these three trades together employed 57% of all occupied female over ten years of age, (Census of England and Wales, 1911, PP 1913, Cd 7018 lxxviii, 321, p.159)

6. In 1861 73,336 women were described in the census as hotel-keepers, publicans and lodging house and eating house keepers, (Census of England and Wales, 1861, PP 1863 (3221) LIII, Part I, 265, p.33) and in 1911 74,671 as lodging house and boarding house keepers (Census of England and Wales, 1911, PP 1917-18, Cd 8941, xxxv, 483, Table XLVII, p.140). This probably underestimates the situation as many women who took in lodgers would not have considered it as an occupation.

7. See figures contained in the Report of the Departmental Committee on Vagrancy, PP (1906), Cd 2852, ciii

8. In 1861 63,042 females were recorded in workhouses, (Census of England and Wales, 1861, PP 1863 (3221) LIII Part 1, 265, p.66) and in 1911 103,544 females, (Census of England and Wales, 1911, PP 1914-16, Cd 7929 lxxxi, 385, p.72)

9. For a description of the workhouse and attitudes towards it see the Minority Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress, PP 1909, Cd 4499

10. Shelter, cited in The Guardian, November 23 1993

11. In 1861 out of 287,101 dressmakers and milliners, 803 were male, (Census of England and Wales, 1861, op. cit, Table XVII); in 1911 out of 405,818 dressmakers and milliners, 3799 were male, and out of 1,413,619 indoor domestic servants 54,260 were male (Census for England and Wales, 1911, PP 1917-18 Cd 8491 xxxv, 483, p.136 and p.6)

12. See occupational tables cited above

13. Ray Strachey, The Cause: a short history of the women's movement in Great Britain, Virago, 1979, p.5

14. A comparison of male and female wages in cotton manufacture in 1886 showed that on average men were paid £65.12s p.a. and women £39.15, (PP, 1889 LXX 843, Wages, textile trades, Comparison of normal wages in 1886, p.887)

15. Dorothy M Zimmern, The wages of women in industry, National Conference on the prevention of destitution, P S King & Sons, 1912, p.143

16. Josephine Butler, (ed.), Women's work and women's culture, Macmillan & Co., 1869, p.xvi

17. See Martha Vicinus, Suffer and be still: women and the Victorian age, Methuen & Co., 1980, p.63

18. Jessie Boucherett, 'How to provide for superfluous women' in Josephine Butler, op. cit., p.58

19. Census of England and Wales, 1911, PP 1917-18 Cd.8491 xxxv, 483, p.161

20. In 1895, for example, 57,886 females were recorded as receiving outdoor relief compared to 16,199 men, (Pauperism, England and Wales, PP 1895 LXXXIV, 169, p.viii)

21. Kate Hyndley, Women and the family, Wayland (Publishers) Ltd., 1989, p.16

22. See the occupational figures for 1911 which show that widows made up the biggest proportion of women employed as charwomen, Census of England and Wales, 1911, PP 1917-18, Vol.XXXV, Cd 8941, pp. 107-8

23. Mary Higgs and Edward Hayward, Where shall she live? The homelessness of the woman worker, P S King & Sons, 1910, pp. 128-9

24. R Vorspan, 'Vagrancy and the new Poor Law in Victorian and Edwardian England', English Historical Review XCII, 1977 p.174

25. Report of the Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes, PP 1885, c 4402-1, Vol II Minutes of Evidence, para. 8526

26. Ibid, para.8528

27. See Edward Royle, (ed.), Issues of regional identity, Manchester University Press, 1998

28. See Census of England and Wales, 1911, PP 1917-18 Cd 8491 xxxv, 483, Diagram XXXI Proportion of females occupied per 10,000 living in each administrative county, p.158

29. See Census of England and Wales, 1911, Table LVII, which shows 8% of women employed in domestic service in urban areas compared to 11% in rural areas, ibid, p.160

30. Mary Higgs and Edward Hayward, op.cit., p.126

31. Alexander Bloch in an essay, *Estimating housing needs*, writes: 'the census schedule for England and Wales includes questions concerning the number of persons in each household, age, sex and marital condition and relationship to the head of the household. These questions have been asked at every census since 1851, but very little of the information from these replies has been tabulated and published. Alexander Bloch', 'Estimating housing needs', in The Architectural Press, 1946, p.44

32. In 1911, for example, 92% of female domestic servants were unmarried, 3% married and 5% widowed, Census of England and Wales, 1911, PP 1917-18 Cd 8491 xxxv, 483, Table LVII, p.159

33. E Higgs, Women, occupations and work in the nineteenth century, p.60, cited in June Purvis, Hard lessons: the lives and education of working class women in nineteenth century England, Polity Press in association with Basil Blackwell, 1989, p.26

34. Michael Winstanley, 'Women and the grocery trade in Britain, 1851-1911: a regional analysis', in Edward Royle, (ed.), op.cit., p.161

35. Joyce Bellamy, 'Occupational statistics in nineteenth century censuses' in R Lawton, (ed.), The census and social structure: an interpretive guide to nineteenth century censuses for England and Wales, Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1978, p.169

36. Ibid

37. Michael Winstanley, op.cit., p.161.

38. Joyce Bellamy, op.cit., p.172

39. See, for example, The Children's Employment Commission, 1864, PP Vol.XXII, Helen Rogers, 'The good are not always powerful, nor the powerful always good: the politics of women's work in the London needle trades, 1841-64', Women's History Notebook, No.1, June 1994.

40. See Michael Winstanley, op.cit., pp. 161-68 for a discussion of census figures in relation to female employment in the retail trade.

41. Census of England and Wales, 1911, PP 1917-18, Cd 8491, xxxv, 483, p.144

42. Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on the Truck Acts, 1908, paras 13484-5, p.136

43. See Guide to census reports, Great Britain, 1801-1966, HMSO, 1977

44. Census of England and Wales, 1911, PP 1917-18 Cd 8491 xxxv, 483, p.89

45. The number of female domestic servants increased by 415,952 between 1831 and 1861, Census of England and Wales, 1861, PP 1863 (3221) LIII, Part I, 265, p.34

46. Census of England and Wales, 1911, PP 1914-16 Cd.8491 xxxv, 483, p.162

47. Ibid, p.157

48. Ibid, p.137

49. In 1861 20.2% female children aged between ten and fifteen were returned as following an occupation; by 1911 this had fallen to 10.4%, Census of England and Wales, 1911, PP 1917-18 Cd.8491 xxxv, 483, p.162

50. Clara Collet, The Money Wages of Indoor Domestic Servants, PP 1899 XCII I

51. John Burnett, (ed.), Useful toil: autobiographies of working people from the 1820s to the 1920s, Allen and Lane, 1974

52. Mary Higgs and Edward Hayward, Where shall she live? The homelessness of the woman worker, 1910

53. Ibid, p.iii

54. Ibid, p.57

55. Pamela Horne, The rise and fall of the Victorian servant, Allan Sutton Publishing Ltd, 1990

56. Leonore Davidoff, 'Class and gender in Victorian England' in J Newton, M Ryan and J Walkowitz (eds), Sex and class in women's history, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983

57. Christine Walkley, The ghost in the looking glass: the Victorian seamstress, Peter Owen, 1981

58. Wilfred B Whitaker, Victorian and Edwardian shopworkers: the struggle to obtain better conditions and a half-holiday, David & Charles, 1973

59. Ibid, p.55

60. Clara Collet, op.cit., p.3

61. 24,001 female day-servants were recorded in 1911, Census of England and Wales, 1911, PP 1917-18 Cd.8491 xxxv, 483, p.106.

62. Clara Collet found that the average money wage of female indoor servants was £17.16s in London and £15.10s in the rest of England and Wales, (C Collet, op. cit., p.4)

63. See John R Gillis, 'Servants, sexual relations and the risk of illegitimacy in London 1801-1900' in J Newton et al, (eds.), 1983, op.cit, p.121

64. In 1911 12,164 female domestic servants were recorded in shops, schools and similar establishments, and 63,164 in hotels and lodging houses etc., Census of England and Wales, 1911, PP 1917-18 Cd.8491 xxxv, 483, p.106

65. Aristocratic households could be extremely large; the Duke of Westminster, for example, one of the richest men in England, employed three hundred servants at his family seat at Eaton in Cheshire, see Pamela Horne, op.cit., p.23

66. See Victoria Glendenning's Introduction to Leonore Davidoff, The best circles: society, etiquette and the season, Croom Helm Ltd, 1973.

67. Pamela Horne, op.cit., p.22

68. Charles Booth found that the 1891 census returns showed that 59% of families in London employed one servant, followed by 23% employing two, (quoted in Clara Collet, op.cit., p.13)

69. Clara Collet, op.cit., p.21

70. Ibid, p.23

71. B Seebohm Rowntree, Poverty: a study of town life, 1903, (2nd edition) cited in Pamela Horne, 1990, p.17

72. Anne Thackeray, Lady Ritchie, 'A maid of all work', 1874, quoted in Janet Murray, Strong-minded women and other lost voices from nineteenth century England, Penguin Books, 1984, p.331

73. A farmer's maid', c 1890, from 'Fenland Chronicle', recollections of William Henry and Kate Mary Edwards, collected and edited by their daughter Sybil Marshall in 1967, in Janet Murray, op.cit., p.334

74. John Burnett, op.cit., p.216

75. Ibid, p.217

76. Clara Collet, op.cit., p.39

77. Leonore Davidoff, Mastered for life: servant and wife in Victorian and Edwardian England, in the Journal of Social History, Summer 1974, p.409, cited in June Purvis, 1989, op.cit., p.30

78. Flora Fraser, The English gentlewoman, Barrie and Jenkins, 1987, p.159

79. Winifred Griffiths, in John Burnett, (ed.), op cit, p.115

80. Pamela Horne, op cit, p.139

81. Ibid

82. Joan Perkin, op cit, p.182

83. Leonore Davidoff, Class and Gender in Victorian England, in J Newton et al, op.cit., p.26

84. Lilian Westall, house-maid, in John Burnett, op.cit., p.217

85. Lucy Luck, straw-plait maker, in John Burnett, (ed.), op.cit., p.72

86. John Gillis, op.cit., p.132

87. Martha Vicinus, op.cit., p.63

88. The Oxford Ladies Association for the Care of Young Girls commented on the fate of such women, 'a girl who is burdened with a child, a burden which she almost invariably she has to bear without help from her partner in sin, is heavily handicapped in the struggle for existence.....If left to themselves, therefore, they must either seek to pick up a precarious livelihood by daily work, and provide such poor nourishment as they can for themselves and their children, or if they go into service they must find persons who will keep the children for the smallest possible amount'. (Annual Report of the Oxford Ladies Association for the Care of Friendless Girls, 1895, p.7)

89. Quoted in Leonore Davidoff, op.cit., p.27

90. William Booth, In darkest England and the way out, Charles Knight & Co., 1970, p.192

91. Anon, Work about the Five Dials, Macmillan & Co., 1878, p.17

92. Leonore Davidoff, op.cit., p.37

93. Pamela Horne, op.cit., p.164

94. In 1861 14,461 female inmates of workhouses in England and Wales had been domestic servants, five times higher than the next largest category, charwoman, (Census of England and Wales, 1861, PP 1863 (3221 LIII, Part I, 265, p.66); in 1911 the figure was 18,962, two and a half times higher than the number of charwomen, still the next largest category, (Census of England and Wales, 1911, PP 1914-16 Cd.7929 lxxxi, 385, p.193)

95. Leonore Davidoff, op.cit., p.57

96. Anon, Work about the Five Dials, 1878, Macmillan & Co., p.31

97. Mary Higgs and Edward Hayward, op.cit., p.36

98. *The Guardian*, May 28, 1913, quoted in The Guardian, 28 May 1996

99. Clara Collett, op.cit., p.23

100. Ibid, p.33

101. See the figures in the censuses on the proportions of the female population employed in domestic service and textile manufacture in various counties and towns which show much higher proportions of women in textile manufacture than domestic service in areas where such employment was available, (Census of England and Wales, 1861, PP 1862 (3056) L, Table 10, Census of England and Wales, 1911, PP 1917-18 Cd 8491 xxxv, 483, pp.132-3).

102. Census of England and Wales, 1911, PP 1917-18 Cd.8491 xxxv, 483, p.106

103. Ibid

104. Christine Walkley, op.cit., p.1

105. Joan Perkin, op.cit., p.176

106. Ibid

107. Ibid

108. Christine Walkley, op.cit., p.2

109. Letter to *The Times*, 17 June 1863, from 'a tired dressmaker', quoted in Christine Walkely, op.cit., p.36

110. Evidence to the Children's Employment Commission, 1864 PP Vol XXII p.118, quoted in Christine Walkley, op.cit., p.28

111. Ibid

112. Helen Rogers, 'The good are not always powerful, nor the powerful always good: the politics of women's work in the needle trades, 1841-64', Women's History Notebook, No.1, June 1994, p.5

113. Statement of Miss Bramwell, Superintendent of The Home, Great Marlborough Street to Children's Employment Commission, 1864, quoted in Christine Walkley, op.cit., p.87

114. Ibid

115. See Helen Rogers' discussion of this issue, op.cit., 1994

116. Evidence of Miss Black, (Truck Acts (Departmental Committee) Vol LIX, 1908, p.19)

117. Christine Walkley, op.cit., p.87

118. Ibid

119. Gertude Tuckwell, Women in Industry, 1908, Vol I, p.4, quoted in Mary Higgs and Edward Hayward, op.cit., p.7.

120. Mr T Spencer Jones, The Moral Side of Living in, p.6, quoted in Mary Higgs and Edward Hayward, op.cit., p.38

121. Wilfred Whitaker, op.cit., p.8

122. See Harriet Bradley, Men's work, Women's work, Polity Press, 1989, p.174

123. Truck Acts (Departmental Committee) Vol LIX, 1908, Appendix XII Document put in by Mr J A Rees, Living-in System - Typical Cases, para 180

124. Truck Acts (Departmental Committee), para 13144, p.654

125. Wilfred Whitaker, op cit.,p.12

126. Truck Acts (Departmental Committee), IV, Shop Assistants - Living-in system, para 177, p.69

127. Ibid, p.70

128. Clementina Black, 'Sweated industry and the minimum wage', 1907, p.48., quoted in Mary Higgs and Edward Hayward, op.cit., p.39

129. Truck Acts (Departmental Committee), Appendix III, Exhibit Number 4, Some Fines Fixed at a Draper's Establishment in South Wales in 1897

130. Report of Truck Acts (Departmental Committee), para 178, p.71

131. Cited in Wilfred Whitaker, op.cit., p.12

132. Report of Truck Acts (Departmental Committee), para 177, p.71

133. National Vigilance Association, In the grip of the white slave trader, C Arthur Pearson Ltd., n.d., p.16.

134. Evidence of Margaret Bondfield to the Truck Acts Committee, para 177, p.75

135. Ibid, para 183, p.77

136. Mary Higgs and Edward Hayward, op.cit., p.37

137. Ibid

138. Margaret Bondfield, A Shop Girl's Life 1894 -1902, quoted in Janet Murray, 1984, p.359.

139. Report of Truck Acts (Departmental Committee), para 177 p.71

140. Ibid, para 178, p.71

141. Cited in Mary Higgs and Edward Hayward, op. cit., p.48

142. Report of Truck Acts (Departmental Committee), para 178, p.71

143. Wilfred Whitaker. op. cit., p.28

144. June Purvis, Hard lessons: the lives and education of working class women in nineteenth century England, Polity Press, 1989, Introduction

Chapter 6

THE GIRLS' FRIENDLY SOCIETY

> *For the hundreds of Preventive and Rescue Homes, Industrial Schools, Convalescent Homes and Homes of Rest, the Women of England seem to be almost exclusively responsible. Here and there men act as treasurers, visitors and members of committee,....but the whole army of "mothers", matrons, trainers and teachers etc., are all women, and it may safely be predicted that these homes have received their first impulse from woman, and could not now be carried on without her.*
> *(Edith Sellars,* 1893[1])

It is clear from the evidence presented that housing was a major problem for single working women. It was not one which was addressed by the mainstream housing reform movement, which concentrated attention on the housing of working-class families, but it was taken up by a number of the women's societies which came together in the second half of the nineteenth century. This chapter is concerned with a case study of the largest of these societies, the Girls' Friendly Society, begun in 1875. However, in order to set its work in context, it will be preceded by a broader section outlining the provision made by other women's organizations active in the period.

Miss Edith Sellars' report to the International Conference of Women held in Chicago in 1893, *Women's work for the welfare of girls*,[2] provides a useful overview of the range of welfare activities in which British women were involved. The societies which she described were divided into two broad categories, those which were aimed at preventive work and those which aimed at rescue work, and accordingly worked with either girls of 'respectable character', or those who were considered 'fallen' or at risk of falling. The three largest organizations - the Girls' Friendly Society (GFS), the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), and the Metropolitan Association for

Befriending Young Servants (MABYS) - were concerned with the former group, and the accommodation they provided was for young women of 'unblemished character'.

The YWCA was the first of these organizations to be set up. It was begun in 1856 by Lady Kinnaird who, touched by the 'loneliness and joylessness'[3] of the lives of girls coming up to London to work in shops or businesses, opened a home for young women in Fitzroy Square. It quickly developed into a national and international organization which by 1893 had 100,000 members.[4] In London alone in that year it ran nineteen lodging homes,[5] and by 1913 this had expanded to thirty-eight homes, with a further eighty-one in England and Wales.[6] The YWCA worked with respectable young women, 'socially better placed than servants', and attempted to provide a complete system of care for them. Its work was described in the following terms:

> If a girl be ill, she is nursed in one of the society's homes; if she needs rest, a holiday is arranged for her. When she wishes to change her situation, there is a general secretary to give her advice, and an agency to put her in the way of finding work. If she have a fancy for roving, either the continental or the colonial department takes charge of her.[7]

The comprehensiveness of the YWCA's provision was very typical of the work of these organizations, all of which were concerned with 'befriending' and 'mothering' their young women members.

The Metropolitan Association for Befriending Young Servants (MABYS) was begun in 1873 on the initiative of Jane Nassau Senior, following her investigations into the conditions of girls leaving Poor Law schools. It described itself as a society of ladies, 'every member of which undertakes to act as friend, advisor, mother in fact, to girls trained in workhouses'.[8] In 1893 the Association was running thirty-two employment registries, seven training homes, a convalescent home and thirteen servants' lodging

homes in London, and aimed to act 'as general protector to all the servants in London between the ages of thirteen and twenty'.[9]

The Ladies' Associations for the Care of Friendless Girls were a fourth large grouping which worked with a wider mixture of young women. They aimed to help not only the respectable, but also 'those upon whom the world is somewhat inclined to look askance'.[10] Local groups were set up around the country in the 1880s following the campaigning work of Ellice Hopkins, the famous purity worker,[11] and by 1893 there were 120 such associations in existence. They engaged in a range of rescue and preventive work aimed at removing girls from 'dangerous surroundings and putting them in the way of earning an honest living',[12] and ran both lodging homes for single women and mother and baby homes for unmarried mothers coming out of the workhouse.

In addition to these major societies, Edith Sellars reported that every religious community ran its own organization for helping girls and young women, and that a host of smaller independent homes also existed. There were also hundreds of rescue homes, Magdalene homes and penitentiaries for the reclamation of fallen women. Most of these were managed by committees of men, but it was usually women, often religious sisters, who undertook the day-to-day running of them. The societies involved differed in their particular aims, but this was a major effort by women of the middle and upper classes on behalf of single working women. The largest of all these organizations was the Girls' Friendly Society and I have chosen to make a case study of it because it exemplified many of the concerns about young working women at the time and the way in which women of the upper classes organized to help them.

The GFS was launched in 1875, some ten years after Octavia Hill began her housing work in Marylebone. It went on to become not only the largest women's organization

in Britain, but also a world-wide organization which by 1914 had branches in twenty-two countries. Although primarily conceived of as a purity organization, one of its major achievements was the setting up of a comprehensive network of accommodation lodges for single working women.

The significance of the GFS in the terms of this study is two-fold: firstly, that it was an organization which recognised, and responded to, the housing needs of single women, and secondly, that it was an all-woman organization - run by women for the benefit of women. There are paradoxes within this, however. While it was a major housing provider, accommodation was perceived as a means to an end - that of protecting girls in the city - rather than as a good in its own right. And despite the fact that the Society took great pride in being an all-female society, working in the spirit of 'banded womanhood', it was not concerned with women's emancipation, but with maintaining a 'virtuous British maidenhood'. This places it in an earlier tradition of female organization, but while it was not overtly 'feminist' in its aims, the way in which the women involved organized together, and their concern for their 'poorer sisters', exemplified many of the traits of the early women's movement.

It is the housing element of the GFS's work which is the focus here, but it is also important to examine other aspects of the Society - its ethos, organization and development over the period - in order to place that work in context. The characteristics of the two groups which made up its membership, the Associates and the Members, will be investigated, and the class dynamics between them. Another question to be explored is the way in which the Society viewed single women's housing needs, and in this context I particularly want to focus on the GFS's presentation of single working-class women as victims of male sexual predation and the role that housing was perceived to play in protecting them from this.

SOURCES

There is a mass of primary material on the GFS, both at a central and a local level, and the very wealth of the material makes it difficult to sift and analyse. There are a number of GFS journals and periodicals[13] which span the period from 1876 onwards and run into thousands of editions. The GFS national archive contains pamphlets, minute books and reports of committees, the unpublished reminiscences and memoirs of early leaders,[14] letters, newscuttings and scrapbooks. There are also the records of the diocesan and parish branches and these are held locally all over the country. The material I have selected for analysis is mainly that relating to the development of the Society and its lodgings work and I have also used the records of the Oxford branch in order to look in more detail at the workings of the GFS at a local level.

The GFS has published two histories of its own. The first was written in 1897 by Agnes Money,[15] one of the founding members of the Society, and the second in 1926 by Mary Heath-Stubbs,[16] on the occasion of the Society's fiftieth anniversary. Both contain much useful information, but their major purpose was to celebrate the achievements of the GFS rather than to offer any more critical analysis. There is little secondary literature on the GFS, and it is a male historian, Brian Harrison, who has written the only article on the Society, *For Church, Queen and Family*.[17] This gives an analysis of the GFS as a religious and deferential organization, setting it in the context of both the Anglican revival and the Conservative revival of late Victorian Britain. Harrison also discusses the Society as a women's movement and the extent to which, despite its more reactionary aspects, it could be said to have contributed to women's emancipation. Apart from this study, the organization has been neglected, both by housing historians and by historians of the women's movement.

ORIGINS

From its inception, the social characteristics of the GFS and its major preoccupations were evident, as the history of its early years shows. The idea for the Society originated with Mrs Mary Townsend (1841-1918). Mrs Townsend was the daughter of an Anglican priest in Ireland and came from a background of minor aristocracy. Both her parents died in her early childhood and she was brought by an aunt, and possibly the early loss of her parents played some part in her life-long concern for 'friendless girls'. In 1863 she married Frederick Townsend, a wealthy Hampshire squire, and from 1886-92, a Unionist MP. The couple had no children and Mrs Townsend involved herself in charitable and educational work with the tenants of her husband's estate and in church affairs. Her interest in preventive work with young women began in 1872, when at the age of thirty-one, she was asked by the Bishop of Winchester to join an organization for rescue work in the diocese. She determined instead to set up a society to *prevent* young women from 'falling'. Mrs Townsend argued, not that there was not a need for rescue work, but that there were already many other agencies working in this field. 'England is full of homes for the depraved' she said, and what was needed was an organization that would act as an example and inspiration to young women - a society 'whose aim should be to set before the maidens of England the beauty of a blameless life'.[18]

In 1874 she called together a meeting with three other women in order to discuss her idea - Mrs Tait, the wife of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Mrs Harold Browne, the wife of the Bishop of Winchester, and Mrs Jane Nassau Senior, the founder of the Metropolitan Association for Befriending Young Servants, (and a close friend of Octavia Hill). One man was also invited to be present, the Rev T Fosbery, a personal friend of Mrs Townsend. The meeting was held at Lambeth Palace and this setting, together with the status of the women attending, was to set the tone of the Society -

organized by Anglican ladies of a high social standing and set within the structure of the Church. Mrs Townsend's vision was of a national society in which ladies in every parish would befriend young working girls:

> With the understanding that any girl who was a member of the Society could go to her if she were in any sort of trouble; so that wherever a girl might be, however far from home and friends, she should always find a lady ready to be her friend in the strange places when she arrived there.[19]

The kindly intent of the Society is spelled out here. In addition to its major aim of upholding virtue, there was much concern about the lonely situation of girls working away from home and far from their families.

A two tier system was to be set up, consisting of young working women enrolled as 'Members', and ladies as 'Associates', who would act as concerned 'friends' to them. The theme of reaching out across the class divide was very evident here, as in other voluntary associations of the time, and much was made of the individual influence which Associates exerted over their members. 'The personal friendship existing between Associate and Member in the Branch', said Mrs Townsend, 'is the foundation of our work'.[20] However, this did not imply friendship in any equal or reciprocal sense of the word. The Associates acted as guides and mentors to their Members, rather than as companions, and despite the good intentions of the Society, the social distance between Associates and Members meant that the relationship could only be a very unequal one. 'A flower, a book, a picture' said Mrs Townsend, 'little things that we should think so commonplace, are wonders of delight to them'.[21]

ORGANIZATION

Following the Lambeth Palace meeting, work began immediately on organizing the Society. A national office was set up in London and in 1875 the Society was put on

a formal footing with the election of a Central Council. The Society's structure began with the parish branch - the local group of Members gathered around an Associate. Initially the Council liaised directly with the parish branches, but as the Society grew, decentralisation became necessary, and by 1882 each diocese had its own council which in turn elected delegates to the Central Council. The Society organized its work through Departments, committees with special responsibility for particular areas, and the scope of its work is indicated by the titles of the early departments: Girls in Factories, Girls in Business, Workhouse Girls, Registries, Industrial Training, Sick Members, Emigration, Needlework, Literature, Lodges and Homes of Rest.[22]

Mrs Townsend became the first President of the Society in 1875 and the Archbishop of Canterbury its first Patron. Work began on drawing up the Constitution and Rules of the Society in 1876 and these were approved at a meeting in 1880.

THE GIRLS'S FRIENDLY SOCIETY

Motto 'bear ye one another's burdens'

Objects of the Society

1. To bind together in one Society ladies as Associates and working girls and young women as Members, for mutual help (religious and secular), for sympathy and prayer.
2. To encourage purity of life, dutifulness to parents, faithfulness to employers, and thrift.
3. To provide the privileges of the Society for its Members wherever they may be, by giving them an introduction from one branch to another.

Central Rules

I. Associates to be of the Church of England (no such restriction being made as to Members), and the organization of the Society to follow as much as possible that of the Church, being, diocesan, ruridecanal, and parochial.

II. Associates (Working and Honourary) and Members to contribute annually to the funds; the former not less than 2s 6d. a-year, the latter not less than 6d. a-year. Members' payments to go to the Central Fund.

III. No girl who has not borne a virtuous character to be admitted as a Member; such character being lost, the Member to forfeit her Card.[23]

The religious basis of the Society is spelt out very clearly here, and the Third Central Rule was unambiguous in its insistence on virtue among Members.

The fact that it took four years to draw up and approve the constitution reflects the difficulties which the ladies of the GFS experienced in organizing themselves from a group of like-minded friends into a formal body. Agnes Money wrote feelingly of the problems they faced in knowing how to run committees and contrasted their ineptitude with the accustomed ease with which men ran their organizations.[24] Knowledge of procedure, she said, was something which was acquired by men 'in their cricket clubs and various organizations, but which, till the later years of the nineteenth century, was wholly lacking in a woman's education'.[25] Women had to learn the business and the ladies of the GFS set out about it with a will. In fact they grasped the rules of procedure so effectively that they developed almost a mania for bureaucracy. Committees and sub-committees abounded,[26] and in the years between 1896 and 1906 alone, over fifty committees and sub-committees are listed. Some of these were central to the running of the organization, but others were extremely mundane, such as the sub-committee for drawing up a slip to accompany the Members's card.

This is in sharp contrast to the determinedly non-organizational stance of Octavia Hill, but the setting up of a national organization encompassing thousands of members perhaps required a different approach. The GFS took pride in the fact that they were a society of women capable of operating in the world of committees and public accountability, and were conscious that they were an example of female empowerment. In 1892 the *Associates' Journal* wrote that the GFS Central Council was 'certainly the largest assembly of women exercising so much power'.[27]

DEVELOPMENT

The Society was an immediate success. A sister society was started in Scotland in 1875, followed in 1877 by Ireland, and in the same year the Society's first overseas branch was launched in Lowell, Massachussets.[28] In 1880 Queen Victoria agreed to

become Patron, and an Honourary Associate. In 1884, ten years after its inception, the Society numbered over one hundred thousand women in England and Wales and Mrs Townsend described it as 'the largest Society of women, I believe, ever formed.[29] Membership reached its peak in 1913 with 39,926 Associates and 197,493 Members,[30] and in 1914 there were also 81,374 Candidates,[31] (the junior category of membership added in 1877 for girls aged between eight and twelve), thus making a total of over 300,000 girls and women who belonged to the GFS just before the First World War. The scale of the Society's work can be judged from the *Associates' List* for 1892 which lists fifty-six GFS lodges in England and Wales, eighty-seven employment registries, 222 clubs and recreation rooms, sixty-one homes of rest and arrangements for meeting members at 159 railway stations.[32] The overseas work of the Society expanded until it became a world-wide organization with sister societies throughout Europe, the Colonies and America. In 1905 it was said that 'a GFS member may now travel from Paris to Odessa, or from Biarritz to St Petersburg and be safe in the care of the GFS all the way'.[33]

By any standards this was a large and successful organization. Part of the Society's success can be explained by the way it was organized through the Anglican Church. Structured as it was through parish and diocesan branches, it had immediate access to communities the length and breadth of the country, and potential Members and Associates could easily be identified and recruited through the activities of the local Church. The Society also had immediate attractions for both groups of women. For the Members, often isolated servant girls, it offered companionship and activities, and over and above this, very tangible benefits in the shape of premiums for good service, saving schemes, and a network of accommodation lodges and employment registries. For the upper-class women who made up the Associates, it provided a meaningful role in the public world which could be comfortably accommodated within the accepted

structure of Church and neighbourhood activities without threatening their status as ladies or their position at the centre of family life. As the work of Prochaska[34] shows, women were becoming involved in great numbers in philanthropic work in this period and the GFS Associates were part of this movement. At the same time, the widespread concern around prostitution and social purity provided a moral imperative to become involved with a campaign to uphold family values and protect women's purity. Work in the GFS, however, provided a more conservative alternative to becoming involved in the agitation led by Josephine Butler against the Contagious Diseases Acts.

MEMBERS

The major constituency of the Society was domestic servants, the largest group of young women working away from home, but from the start it also recruited members from other occupations. In 1877 it said 'we are very anxious to make known that our Society admits all working girls, those in shops, factories etc (as well as those at home and in service)'.[36] The Society also had a department for Workhouse Girls, referred to as 'our poor desolate sisters'.[37] Attempts were made to extend membership further up the social scale and a committee was set up in 1905 to consider how best to attract members from among the middle and upper classes. The same concern for their well-being was expressed as that for the humbler members, 'they go up (or leave home) from the age of 17 or 18', it was said, 'many of them utterly ignorant of life and its dangers and temptations, many are friendless and alone and need the help of the GFS'.[38] However, recruitment was not very successful among this group and in 1911 only 3,257 of the 194,617 members could be described as 'leisured, educated girls'.[39]

In 1906 domestic servants made up 49% of the total employed membership of the Society,[40] 19% worked in mills, factories and laundries, 19% in business (shops and

offices) and 10% in the professions,[41] (mainly teaching and nursing), which broadly reflects national occupational figures at the time. Problems were encountered in bonding this diverse group of women workers together. In 1884 an Associate commented that 'business girls should be addressed as "young ladies", not as "young women"; nor would they think of joining the GFS if told to do so for their own good'.[42] Business girls considered themselves several stages removed from factory workers or domestic servants and it is ironic that an organization which took as one of its main themes the need to reach out across the class gulf, had to accommodate itself to the myriad class differences which existed among its members.

The great numbers of Members recruited shows that the GFS was successful in appealing to young working women. There are a number of reasons why this might have been so. The age of marriage was relatively late throughout the period and for girls living away from home, often in isolated positions, membership of the Society offered opportunities for social life and companionship which they could not otherwise have enjoyed. Prayer meetings, garden parties, concerts, outings and organized entertainments were provided for Members and such occasions must have offered a welcome respite from work.

Over and above the social aspects of the GFS, there were very real material advantages to be derived from membership of the Society. For those in domestic service, employment registries, premiums for long service, bonuses on savings and marriage gifts were part of the benefits. By 1883 the GFS had established forty-eight registry offices, and was finding positions for nearly 4,000 members a year.[43] In 1905 a Central Employment Office was established in order to integrate the work of the registries, and in 1913 it dealt with applications from 15,811 employers and 10,482 servants nationally.[44]

There was much emphasis on encouraging girls to be good and faithful servants; premiums were paid to Members who stayed in their first positions for more than a year[45] and the Society sponsored exams for domestic service.[46] The importance of service was stressed in the Society's literature:

> Perhaps you may smile at the idea of a kitchen maid's or under housemaid's life being a noble one; and yet it is quite possible, for if the grandest of all lives are those which are spent in working for others, do you not see that God has called you to a position which gives you every opportunity of living such a life?[47]

Such homilies were aimed at elevating what was essentially a life of drudgery into a noble calling, and one can see that it was a message which it was in the interests of the servant-keeping classes to instill. Associates stood to benefit from arrangements which ensured not only a supply of trained and commended servants, but also a compliant and deferential workforce. There were benefits to be accrued in both directions, however, and membership of the Society was a positive advantage in getting employment. Bessie Gregain, who had been a Member before the First World War, said that, 'if you wanted a job and they knew you'd been a member of the GFS, you got a job quite easily' and that, 'whatever jobs they got you they were all with good titled people'.[48] (Complaints were in fact recorded from members of the middle classes that the GFS 'appropriated' the better class of girls[49]).

The GFS also took an interest in training for other areas of work and in 1881 the Department for Domestic Economy and Industrial Training was established. This issued a series of career guides for young women entitled *Work, and how to do it*, which covered 'National and Private teaching, sick nursing, needlework, cooking, housework, nursing children, work in shops and factories, dress-making, telegraphy, clerks' work and art work etc'[50] Some of these jobs fell into the realm of traditional female menial work, but the inclusion of telegraphy, clerical work, teaching and nursing

demonstrates both that new areas were opening up for women, and that the Society's ambitions for its members were expanding. There are parallels here with the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women, founded in 1859 by the feminist Jessie Boucheret, a member of the Langham Place circle. It is significant that despite its more conservative orientation the GFS actively promoted women's opportunities. The work of the Society also offered a certain amount of employment for women. Paid organizers and teachers were appointed to run girls' clubs and classes, and resident matrons were employed in the accommodation lodges.

The Society provided other benefits for its members and the welfare system it created was a comprehensive and far reaching one. In addition to its employment registries and accommodation lodges, the Society set up Homes of Rest for members exhausted by work, holiday homes, nursing homes for sick members, a hospice for women with incurable diseases, a home for epileptic members, almshouses for impoverished Members and Associates and a needlework scheme to provide employment for invalid members.[51] The annual subscription members paid for these benefits was sixpence. Associates paid 2s 6d per annum, made private donations and organized fund-raising campaigns in order to pay for these welfare services. They were all in place by the end of the century, before the Liberal Government social reforms of the Edwardian period, (which made some provision for insured workers, but very limited for women), and must have made life considerably more secure for the working-class members of the GFS.

Apart from the material benefits to be gained from belonging to the GFS, to be a member of a recognised band of 'pure and virtuous Christian maidenhood' might well have seemed desirable to some young women at the time. Because of the many thousands of Members, and the lack of testimony from them, it is difficult to know

much about them as individuals. The contents of *Friendly Leaves*, the Members' journal, gives some idea of the audience of the GFS. The articles generally consisted of 'improving literature' - homilies about the duties of daughters and servants, bible quizzes, articles on botany and zoology, and cautionary tales about young girls who came up to town, were led into bad company and bad ways, and generally met with a bad end - reinforcing the messages about the dangers for young women in the city. This may, of course, indicate the ideas of the Associates about what young women should be reading as much as the interests of the Members themselves, but the circulation of *Friendly Leaves* was very wide, reaching 60,000 in 1911.[52]

THE ASSOCIATES

The appeal made to the Associates was different, but involvement in the GFS met a need for this group too. GFS Associates were the ladies who in each parish, recruited and befriended Members, organized activities for them, recommended them to employers, made arrangements for them to be met at railway stations when in transit, and ensured that they were found safe lodgings. They also formed local committees to manage and oversee the accommodation lodges and employment registries and to liaise with the Central Council and the Departments. They were essentially voluntary workers, but what distinguished them from the tradition of 'do-gooding' ladies was their involvement in a national women's organization and the scope which this offered. GFS work could be merely a pastime for well-to-do young women with time on their hands, but for those who chose it could involve considerable responsibility. Heading a Department at a national level, for example, required the ability to manage funds, plan future developments and organize a large group of people.

There were thousands of Associates working up and down the country (nearly 40,000 in 1913). We do not know much about them as individuals as few achieved any

lasting fame. Probably the only GFS Associate whose name is remembered today is Charlotte Yonge, the novelist, who was one of the first Associates and for many years Diocesan Head of Literature in the Winchester branch. However, there were other outstanding individuals involved in the GFS. Harriet Mason, (1845-1932), for example, who headed the Workhouses Department, was invited by the Local Government Board to become its inspector of boarded-out children in 1885. She was the first women to be appointed to this post since Jane Nassau Senior in 1873 and at the time of her appointment, the only women inspector in the Civil Service.[53] The Hon Mrs Joyce, the head of the Society's Emigration Department from 1885-1920, was made a CBE in 1919 in recognition of her services. Mrs Mary Sumner, founder of the Mothers' Union, another huge Anglican women's organization, was an early Associate, and interestingly, Louisa Hubbard, a champion of many women's causes and publisher of *The Yearbook of Women's Work* was a member of the Central Committee in the 1880s. Lady Knightley of Fawsley was a central figure of the GFS for many years and in 1908 she helped set up the Conservative and Unionist Women's Franchise Association together with Lady Selborne,[54] another member of the Central Council - and one of Octavia Hill's major benefactors. Another member of the Central Council, the Hon Mrs Maclagan, also worked for Octavia Hill in Barretts Court in the 1870s, and clearly there was some overlap between the two groups.

Despite the involvement of Lady Knightly and Lady Selborne in the GFS, the Society expressed no interest at an organizational level in the issue of women's suffrage and in 1919 it refused an invitation to an Anglican thanksgiving service for women's suffrage.[55] The only reference to women's rights I have found in its literature is this poem which appeared in 1880, which begins:

> The RIGHTS of women, what are they?
> The RIGHT to labour,love and pray:
> The RIGHT to weep with those that weep,
> The RIGHT to wake when others sleep.[56]

These are hardly the rights which any progressive women activists of the period would have embraced and some of the Associates displayed distinctly anti-feminist sentiments. Charlotte Yonge, for example, said, without any apparent irony, 'I have no hesitation in declaring my full belief in the inferiority of woman, nor that she has brought it on herself'.[57]

Titled ladies were particularly prominent in the Central Council of the GFS and its various committees, and out of the forty-seven members of the Central Council for 1882, twenty-one of the women were titled.[58] The names of aristocratic ladies added lustre to the public image of the Society, and the greatest lustre of all was added in 1880 when Queen Victoria agreed to become Patron of the Society (followed by Queen Alexandra and Queen Mary), invariably referred to in GFS literature as 'our dear Queen' or our 'beloved Queen'.[59]

Outside the national committees, the Associates tended to be the wives and daughter of local gentry and clergy, 'ladies' with the authority and social standing to assume the supervision and care of young working women and the time to devote to the running of the local branch. Mrs Townsend characterised them as:

> Ladies, older women, mothers and older sisters, and mistresses of households, whose loving hearts, and sound common sense, and practical experience of the world, enable them to advise and guide their younger working sisters.[60]

Class is implicit here, but age and experience of the world, were also some of the desirable characteristics of the Associates. 'Loving hearts' were important and much emphasis was placed on 'mothering'. Shared motherhood was seen as one of the ways of transcending class barriers and Mrs Townsend exhorted potential Associates to think of how they would feel if a daughter of their own was leaving home. 'Would it not be a comfort', she asked, 'if you knew that at least she would have one kind

friend near at hand, who could give a motherly word in the first loneliness and home sickness?'[61]

'Mothering' - the highest calling of Victorian womanhood - was one of the ways in which women's work in the public sphere could be justified, and it was constantly reiterated by women concerned with the welfare of the working classes. As Brian Harrison points out, mothering was in many ways perceived as the ideal relationship - both between generations and classes.[62] However, there is a dual meaning in the concept of mothering because, while it can imply nurturing and care, it also entails the duty to advise and admonish, and both these aspects are evident in way in which the Associates related to the girls and young women they elected to 'mother'. They provided comfort for them when far from their families - and a home in the shape of accommodation lodges, continually exhorted them to high standards of behaviour, and withdrew membership from girls who 'lost their character'.

Motherhood was also stressed as the future destination of the young women with whom they were working. Mrs Townsend talked of the Members as:

> The future women of England, - her future wives and mothers - those who will do much of the work of the world, those who will one day reign, each one in the kingdom of home, whose influence, for good or evil, will be felt for generations to come.[63]

Here we see an evocation of Victorian ideals about women and the home used to justify the work of the Society, in very much the same terms as those used by John Ruskin. However, there is a strange elision on the part of the Associates of the fact that many of the Members needed mothering precisely because they had left their own mothers to become servants in the households of women such as themselves. Home was also eulogised in the literature of the GFS and Mrs Townsend wrote of 'these simple words which I love so well to hear from the lips of a dutiful daughter - my

home'.[64] But there was no questioning of the social system which meant that working-class girls had to leave their own homes at an early age in order to earn a living.

Not all the Associates were mothers themselves and higher social status was considered sufficient qualification to 'mother' young women of the working classes. Records show them to be fairly evenly divided between married and single women,[65] with single women predominating in the higher echelons of the Society. In 1911 of the nine heads of GFS departments, eight were unmarried.[66] The work involved at this level of the organization was considerable and here the Society provided a very real role for single women excluded from the world of paid work. Prochaska comments of the middle and upper-class women involved in charitable work that 'it was difficult to tell who benefitted the most -the objects of sympathy or themselves',[67] and this seems very apposite to the ladies of the GFS. The work provided an outlet to their organizational talents and a purpose in life, and importantly it enabled them to work together with other women.

Associates worked together in ways that are characteristic of other women's organizations of the time. One of their common features was that the women involved in them tended to be very much a group of friends and this was certainly true of the GFS. The names of early committee members crop up time and again, serving on the lists of various committees and subcommittees, and the ladies who were involved in the beginnings of the Society tended to remain involved.[68] As in Octavia Hill's circle the boundaries between working relationships and personal friendships tended to be blurred. Members came to stay with each other, holidays were taken together and very close personal bonds were formed. When Miss Wright, the secretary of the Society, was ill, Mrs Townsend took her away to Bordighera with her to convalesce,[69] and Lady Knightley also came to stay with Mrs Townsend when she was 'exhausted

and broken down with work'.[70] As in Octavia Hill's circle, political differences seem to have been accommodated. Lady Knightley's public allegiance to the suffrage movement did not affect her position as a leader of the GFS and Mrs Townsend talked admiringly of Lady Knightley's commitment to 'the great causes of womanhood'.[71]

However, such close bonds could also have disadvantages and Mrs Townsend was very aware that the GFS was open to charges of being a cosy coterie of friends. In a letter to Council members in 1877 she wrote that she was anxious to get more independent people on the Council or 'people will say "Oh yes...Mrs Townsend - and Miss Oxenham are all such great friends - what one says the other says, that's no council at all!"'[72]

Networking was a feature of the organization of the GFS and although it was a more formal and hierarchical group than that of Octavia Hill and her fellow workers, social ties seemed just as important. These were ties which existed between the Associates; there was a great social distance between the Members and the Associates and we do not know how the experience of being part of an all-female group was perceived or experienced by the Members. Much play was made of the 'sisterhood' of the GFS, but it is difficult to see how sisterhood, in the sense of equality, could have existed between two such disparate groups. The Society did make very strenuous efforts to become a more democratic organization and Mrs Townsend said that it was her ideal that 'every Member should have been a Candidate, and every Associate should have been a Member'.[73] Members were given a greater role in the Society and by 1916 the Constitution was altered to enable them to become not only branch representatives but also Diocesan Heads of Departments. While beginning in a class bound way, the GFS changed its organization radically in response to changing circumstances, and this is a sign of a dynamic society. Its overall purpose did not alter, and Mrs

Townsend firmly declared that, 'the real reason why the Society was started was for the great work of upholding purity'.[74]

PURITY

The GFS was part of the movement for social purity of the Victorian period. Its raison d'etre was virtue and this informed all its activities. Mrs Townsend wrote:

> It is a virtue society. As there are associations for temperance, and associations for thrift, so this is an association of women for the protection and encouragement of purity among women.[75]

There are different kinds of virtue, of course, but while Members were continually urged to be truthful, obedient, humble, gentle etc., it was sexual purity which most concerned the GFS, although Victorian conventions inhibited them from naming it as such. The constant reiteration of moral prescriptions, the provision of safe lodgings, employment registries, supervised travel arrangements, wholesome entertainments and edifying literature - all were intended to keep young women pure by a mixture of constant supervision and the inculcation of certain moral values.

Two strands are evident in the Society's thinking on purity, one concerned with the presumed innocence of young girls and their vulnerability to male sexual exploitation, and the other with their propensity towards promiscuity. Both required different approaches. Physical protection was needed to safeguard them from the dangers of the city, and hence the provision of accommodation lodges, and moral protection was needed to safeguard them from the dangers of corruption, hence the emphasis on improving literature and Christian instruction. The motivation for establishing the category of Candidate, for example, was the fear that even very young girls could be depraved; 'the mischief was often done', it was said, 'the first train of evil laid, before a girl was twelve years old'.[76]

There was a class dimension inherent in this view and part of the Society's mission was to impose a standard of middle-class morality on its working-class members, who, it was believed, lacked one of their own. M H Mason, one of the leading figures of the GFS, argued that sexual misbehaviour was unusual by 'young ladies', partly because they were continually chaperoned and partly because the social ostracization which followed any lapse was an effective deterrent. Working-class girls lacked such disciplines and hence the need for the GFS to make 'a class or caste of girls of virtuous character' to take the place of society at large.[77] What may be true is, not that the working classes lacked a moral structure, but that they took a more pragmatic view of such matters. Pre-marital sexual relations were not so unusual in the working class, and Charles Booth commented that in such circumstances, 'practically no stigma attaches when the pair are keeping company with a view to marriage'.[78] The Society was determined to stamp out such behaviour, and to hold up chastity as the *sine qua non* of respectable girlhood.

Mrs Townsend was convinced that the preventive approach was the only effective one, not on the grounds that 'fallen girls' were fundamentally irredeemable, but that the temptations and dangers pressing in on young women were so great that a standard of purity must be held up as a counter force. She wrote to Agnes Money:

> Every now and then one catches a glimpse, as it were, of the other side, and one seems to realise that a band of weak women really are fighting one of the greatest battles the world has ever seen - the battle for the purity of womanhood, for the possibility of virtuous Christian maidenhood...[79]

Such dramatic rhetoric makes it clear that the GFS perceived their 'battle' as a moral imperative and were convinced of the great dangers facing young women. Not only did they have to fight against the lax moral standards of the lower classes, they also had to protect them from the forces of evil conspiring against them.

There were very real fears that white slave traffickers were ever ready to ensnare young girls. The Society's Registry Offices were established to guard girls seeking work from the dangers of 'unprincipled Registry Offices or low newspapers.....which are nothing better than traps for the unwary'.[80] In 1889 the GFS arranged with the Travellers' Aid Society for girls in transit to be met at railway stations, which were thought to be prime hunting grounds of the white slavers.[81] The GFS painted a lurid picture of the dangers of big cities for girls, especially those who were new to them:

> A country girl comes into a large town in search of work, if she is alone and inexperienced, those who know the state of large towns will shudder to think of the perils that surround her.....[82]
>
> When you go into London or other large towns, be very careful and quiet in your manners and behaviour. Never on any pretext whatever, get into conversation with strangers, either men or women, if they try to speak to you when you're out, if they offer you employment or purpose to treat you to some refreshment - do not talk to them or give them your address.[83]

It is difficult to assess whether this was an accurate picture of either the dangers of the city or of working-class ignorance and naivety, but it perhaps reflects current views of the 'child-like' state of the working class, and particularly that of young working-class women. Possibly for some young women this was true. If the first time they left their home in a country village was to go into service in town, and if they had never travelled on their own before, then they would not have been 'street-wise'.

Fears of the city, particularly of London, were fanned by the portrayal of it as the 'Modern Bablyon'. William Stead's exposee of the extent of child prostitution and the white slave trade in the capital[84] was very influential and a number of societies in which women were prominent supported the movement for the protection of girls.[85] Significantly, one of the Society's few ventures into the political world was connected with Stead's campaign against child prostitution: in 1884 a memorial was sent to

leading members of the Government concerning the raising of the age of consent and 305 petitions bearing 27,777 signatures were raised by the GFS.[86] The age of consent was raised from twelve to sixteen by the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885 and the agitation of women's societies was one of the factors of its success.[87]

Concern about prostitution, 'the great social evil', permeated Victorian and Edwardian society. William Gladstone said that the problem of fallen women was 'the chief burden of his soul',[88] and Mrs Pankhurst wrote in 1913 that 'the problem of prostitution' was 'the greatest evil in the civilised world' and was 'perhaps the main reason for militancy'.[89] We know that prostitution was very widespread,[90] but it is not possible to know how well-founded the fears about the white slave trade were because the nature of illicit activity is for it to be concealed. Judith Walkowitz[91] discounts the existence of traffic in young girls on a large scale and presents prostitution as an economic 'choice', and an occupation which women moved in and out of, rather than a trade which preyed upon innocent women. There were enough contemporary accounts of girls being lured into prostitution,[92] however, to make one suspect that it had some basis in truth, and the recent revelations about the widespread traffic in girls in Europe, confirms the suspicion that this was more than a moral panic.

Josephine Butler and the Ladies National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts had put the issue of prostitution firmly on the agenda of the women's movement in the 1860s. Unlike the ladies of the GFS, many of the leading activists in the campaign were declared feminists, active in various women's causes, including suffrage, and they saw prostitutes as victims of social and economic injustice, rather than as 'depraved women'. The GFS in contrast made no economic analysis of the causes of prostitution, and they did not challenge the sexual double standard, focusing instead on private morality. Miss Mason said that if 'all women were virtuous, it can

hardly be doubted that men in general would be better'.[93] In taking the route they did, of providing practical help for young women, rather than engaging in high profile political campaigning the GFS, avoided the antagonism, and indeed physical attack, with which the efforts of Josephine Butler met from some quarters.[94] Many other women's organizations did the same and it was said that 'there were a "hundred women" who would engage in rescue work for the "one" who would bravely enter the political arena to combat the Acts'.[95] Such practical work was less challenging to the sexual and social status quo and enabled the women concerned to present their work in the traditional framework of caring and mothering.

The GFS was an organization clothed in morality and piety and some of its language and ideas seem antiquated and a little absurd today.[96] They also seem repressive and controlling. Yet even allowing for the element of exaggeration and propaganda, it is clear that there were real dangers for women in the cities. Frightening stories about abduction and the white slave trade might have been a means of controlling young women, but the consequences of seduction were real enough. Great numbers of domestic servants did turn to prostitution as we have seen, as a result of losing their places. And to become pregnant out of wedlock was a catastrophe, which generally ensured a confinement in the workhouse and a life of shame, stigma and poverty. This is vividly illustrated by the returns of the Local Government Board on confinements in workhouses. The Report for the years 1871-1880 said that the deaths that occurred in child-birth were mostly due to illnesses which arose from the state of exhaustion from starvation and misery in which poor women were admitted - 'the depressing conditions', the Report said, 'associated with shame and its serious consequences'.[97]

The GFS in its purity work, was working very directly and very practically for the good of women, and although its moral strictures seem anachronistic and repressive, we must remember that they were operating in an era before the advent of effective birth control, and until this arrived, an unwanted pregnancy spelt ruin. The accommodation work of the GFS was part of the Society's defences against sin. If young women could be provided with safe and supervised lodgings in the city, then they were less vulnerable to seduction or the temptation of resorting to prostitution as a means of ensuring a roof over their heads.

THE ACCOMMODATION WORK OF THE GFS

From the start the GFS concerned itself with providing safe lodgings for its members. The establishment of Servants' Homes and Registries for girls of good character was listed as the first of the four objects of the Society's Central Fund[98] and every Member was issued with a guide containing a list of respectable lodgings and homes to which she could apply for 'friendly shelter and help'. The Society's first headquarters were set up in an existing servants' home for 'little maids of all work' in Railton Road, Brixton. Miss Hawkesley, who began the home, wrote of her concern over these girls - 'their helplessness when, as too often happened, they were out of a place, the dangers to which they were exposed as they went on their errands late at night'.[99] Such sentiments, a mixture of sympathy for the uncared-for position of young servant girls, and fears for their safety, provided the motivation for the accommodation work of the GFS. And it must be remembered that some of these girls were very young. Mrs Townsend wrote that in London alone there were 10,000 maids of all work between the ages of ten to fifteen , an age, she said, 'when *our* girls are mostly in the safe in the shelter of happy homes'.[100]

Writing of the work of the first lodge in 1876 the *GFS Reporter* said:

> It is one in which respectable servants may lodge when out of a place, to which they may come to spend any holiday they may have, and where they may find in the Matron a friend in any case of difficulty or perplexity.[101]

Sixty-four servants stayed in the home during its first year, only nineteen of whom were GFS members. The GFS did not insist on membership of the Society as a prerequisite to staying in one of its lodges, but welcomed all young women who met its criteria of good character. This was reciprocated by other women's accommodation lodges and in 1876, of the twenty seven homes in London listed as available for GFS Members, only five belonged to the GFS itself,[102] indicating that there was considerable collaboration between the various women's societies. The charges made by these homes were 3d to 6d a night, with the inmates generally finding their own board.[103] They were thus not charitable in the sense of being free, nor were the girls using them of the destitute poor.

In its first year of operation the Society opened five lodges in London and two outside London in Shipton-on Stour and Weymouth. The work expanded rapidly after this and between 1875 and 1914 eighty-one lodges were opened in England and Wales.[104] The period of maximum growth was the decade 1880-89 when thirty-one were opened. Some of the lodges were fairly short-lived and closed due to financial problems, and some had several changes of premises, but on the whole it is a record of sustained development which resulted in the establishment of a comprehensive national network of accommodation lodges for women.

At the start the lodges were aimed at domestic servants, but as the Society began to take in young women employed in other occupations, it extended its housing mission accordingly. In 1879 Holborn Lodge in Red Lion Square was opened to provide rooms

for London business girls. This was a significant step as it meant that women could live in the lodges on a permanent basis rather than as a stop-gap between places. It also signalled a recognition on the Society's part that new areas of work, which did not provide living-in accommodation, were opening up for women in the city, and that these workers faced great difficulty in finding affordable and respectable lodgings.

Of all the groups which the Society provided for in its housing work, the ex-workhouse girls were among the most vulnerable. They had no home at all to return to should their employment situation break down and Miss Mason, head of the Workhouses Department, said, 'each Associate should see that her Members do not return to the workhouse between situations as homeless girls must otherwise do'.[105] GFS lodges played an important role here, both in accommodating such girls between places and also in training them in domestic service. In 1876 an agreement was reached between the GFS and the MABYS, the two major organizations working with workhouse girls, that the MABYS should take charge of all girls from the Metropolitan Poor Law Schools and the GFS of all those in unions outside this area.[106]

The lodges were provided, Mrs Townsend said, not 'to encourage you to change places, but simply to give you a safe and friendly home when you are *obliged* to be out of a place'.[107] This changed over time as the membership of the GFS extended beyond domestic servants and the lodges began to cater for residents who lived there on a more permanent basis. Live-in matrons, or superintendents, were employed to run the lodges, and the overwhelming concern seems to have been to provide a friendly and home-like atmosphere, but with a degree of 'motherly' supervision and control. A fund-raising leaflet of 1911 exemplified the mixture of kindly concern and moral surveillance embedded within the ethos of the Society. Young girls it said were

'not necessarily models of wisdom and discretion', and on their own in strange towns were liable to:

> Roam restlessly about the streets to pick up casual and undesirable friends, and in some cases! alas if no more wholesome interest is provided, to end by joining the herd of deteriorating young women too well-known in our larger towns.[108]

However, with 'a good lady Superintendent to know and care for the boarders, and to make the house as much a home as possible', these dangers could be avoided.

For the first thirty years the lodges were run on a local basis, some, it appears, less successfully than others, and in 1905 a central committee was set up to enquire into the financial safety of GFS lodges, Homes of Rest and Training Homes. Miss Millicent Hotchkin, who took up the post of Central Head of the Lodges Department in 1906, set about the task of regulating the affairs of the Department. This was a new departure as in the early days of the Society the Lodges had been the sole Department 'entrusted to members of the opposite sex'.[109] The reasons for this are not explained, but the lodgings work of the Society involved the acquisition and management of property and possibly the early organizers felt that they lacked the experience and business acumen to undertake this.[110]

Miss Hotchkin recommended amalgamating the Departments of Lodges and Homes of Rest into one and bringing them all under the central control of the Society. There was resistance to this from some of the local Associates who liked to be able 'to choose their own homes for their girls',[111] but Miss Hotchkin won the argument and, in 1908, a committee was appointed to manage and control a central fund for Lodges and Homes of Rest.[112] A campaign was launched to raise a fund of £20,000 to improve existing lodges and to open new ones and this was reached in 1910. A grand ceremony was held in the Queen's Hall when the moneys collected were presented

to the Princess of Wales. Eleven new lodges were opened in the provinces between 1908 and 1913 and in 1914 the new central lodge at Westminster was opened; a flagship for the Society, it accommodated seventy women in very superior accommodation.[113]

I have not been able to locate a list compiled by the GFS of their accommodation lodges,[114] but in 1913 the National Association of Women's Lodging Homes published a national directory of women's hostels and lodges which lists sixty-four GFS lodges in Great Britain (see Appendix 10), ten in London, forty-five in England and Wales, four in Scotland and five in Ireland, offering 1,133 beds in total.[115] The lodges were categorised according to the types of women they accommodated: teachers and professionals; business girls; domestic servants; factory workers; and low-paid workers; and while most of the lodges took a mixture of all these groups, there were more for women in the top two categories. Sixty-four of the lodges took teachers, professionals and business girls, thirty-two domestic servants, eight factory workers, and low-paid workers were accommodated at only one lodge, at Bristol. The prices charged varied considerably from 3d a night for lodgings only - which was the price charged at the cheapest common lodging houses - to £1.15s per week for board and lodging at the top end of the range. The lodges varied in size, but on the whole they were small in scale compared with the largest of the YWCA hostels, and charitable shelters.[116]

We do not know the volume of women who used the lodges, but it was noted in 1906 that 6,509 Members and 996 Associates had stayed in the Society's lodges and homes of rest in that year,[117] and, as we have seen, a large number of non-members also used the accommodation. Higher charges were made to those who did not belong to the Society, and as there was a differential rate for non-Members and

non-Associates, a fine social judgement over who was, or was not, a 'lady' must have been required. Associates and Members used the lodges in different ways. Associates stayed in them on an occasional basis when they visited town, and Members could do this too, but they were more likely to live in them on a permanent basis. It is a testament to the GFS's aim of sisterly friendship, that both Associates and Members used the same lodges. However, class distinctions were still writ large within them and different meal times and separate sitting-rooms were provided. A list of 'Hints on the management of houses' provided in 1913 said that 'if the Associates and Members had their meals together there must inevitably be constraint and restraint on both sides'.[118] United though they might have been in the ideology of the GFS, domestic servants and potential employers could not sit down comfortably together.

There is little information in the national records of the GFS on how the individual lodges were run, nor who stayed in them, but the records of the Oxford branch give a fuller picture of a local lodge in action. The Oxford branch of the GFS was begun in 1882 with the provision of Recreation Rooms for Girls and in 1891 it opened a lodge providing four beds intended as temporary lodgings for commended members (ie from another branch) out of a place; a lady superintendent was appointed and in the first year six women stayed in the lodge. By 1897 the Oxford Lodge had moved to larger premises with nineteen beds and it was recorded that 123 women stayed there in the year - thirty six Members, twenty three Associates, and thirty seven non-members and twenty-seven non-Associates - so interestingly, the women from outside the Society slightly outnumbered members at both levels. The boarders in that year were described as young girls being trained for service, and servants staying for short periods while waiting for places. Several girls had been taken in late at night who, through missing a train, or some other emergency, has been left homeless in Oxford. The lodge also operated an employment registry and from 1908 a scheme for meeting

young women arriving at the station. As part of the diocese of Oxford, members 'in need of a change of air' could also be sent to the Diocesan Home of Rest in Berkshire.[119]

Significantly, despite the work which the GFS was doing in providing accommodation for women, it never once referred to it as 'housing', possibly because it was perceived as essentially temporary, something which members would move on from. Its aim was to make a 'home', and as we have seen this entails something more than somewhere to live. In the eyes of the GFS, young women away from their own homes needed a substitute family and a 'motherly eye' kept on them. To the young women themselves, whether they welcomed or resented the guardianship of the GFS, the provision of a safe roof over their heads may have seemed the priority. The essential element of the Society's work was the supervision it involved, and the idea of promoting independent housing for young women was never raised.

In 1914 the GFS hostels came into their own for war work. Initially, those in the South took in women returning from jobs on the Continent[120] and subsequently they were used to house munition workers, landworkers and women in the WAAC and WRNS.[121] They returned to GFS use after the War, but as membership of the Society declined, the number of hostels decreased. The GFS itself has contracted into a much smaller, and indeed, obscure organization in comparison to its glory days in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. However, it is active in twenty-three countries.[122] It is now known as Platform and carries out youth work with girls and young women. It is still a housing provider, and now has twelve housing schemes in England with 316 bed-spaces.

CONCLUSIONS

The GFS was the biggest organization working with girls and young women in Victorian and Edwardian Britain and this fact alone makes it significant in women's history. Its original aim was to band together young working women and ladies in a religious society dedicated to purity, and it succeeded on a grand scale. It expanded rapidly into a world-wide organization and developed its activities to meet the needs, as the Society perceived them, of a wide range of young women. The sheer numbers of young women who joined the Society attest to the fact that it was meeting needs which they themselves experienced. Although initially aimed at domestic servants, it quickly diversified into the many other occupations which young women were entering and adapted its hierarchical organization to a more democratic and participatory way of working. It was a dynamic organization which responded both to changing circumstances and to the change in its membership. The original Associates, who were in many ways, patrician ladies working in the spirit of *noblesse oblige*, were a conservative group in both senses of the word. They exercised both motherly care and supervision over their 'flock' and consciously used the language of motherhood, home and duty to explain their work in a way that was typical of many of the women's organizations of the time.

The Society made no social or economic analysis of the position of its young members and did not question the fact that girls needed substitute homes and 'mothering' precisely because they were forced to leave their own homes in order to earn a living. It set about trying to ameliorate the isolation and loneliness of these young women, and to provide them with them affordable lodgings, but did not question the fundamental social inequalities which gave rise to such needs. Neither did it offer any challenge to the gender inequalities involved. Young women were to be strengthened against temptation to sin by both material and spiritual means, and unscrupulous

procurers and white slavers were to be outwitted, but the question of the power relations between men and women - which allowed sexual exploitation to occur - was not addressed. The preoccupation with sexual purity imbued all the Society's activities, and was seen as the very proper concern of responsible women. Its emphasis on prevention was what lay behind its accommodation work, and this was a two-edged weapon - on the one hand it contributed to a view of women as hapless victims, and could have done nothing to foster a sense of independence, but on the other, by providing safe places for women in the city it contributed to making urban life more accessible to women.

One of the Society's major achievements was the setting up of a comprehensive range of welfare provision for women. In an era when there was little state welfare provision and most working women were excluded from the organized benefits of trades unions and friendly societies, the GFS filled a very important gap. Its lodges, registries, and training schemes helped women with employment; its nursing homes, homes of rest, and hospices took care of them when sick. The premiums for domestic service and saving schemes provided them with some sort of insurance - and the GFS can be seen as very much a 'friendly society' for women. This may have been perceived by the Society as part of its armoury against sin, but it was also an example of women working for women's good in a very practical way. Making self-support feasible for the young women with whom it worked was an important contribution to raising both their status and their self-esteem, and it was brought about by women who stood in no need of such help themselves.

For the Associates, GFS work provided an outlet for their organizational skills, both on a small scale in the local parish, and on a very impressive scale with the national and international work of the Society. It is perhaps not appropriate to assign the label

feminist to women who would not have owned it themselves, but if feminism is measured not just by aims, but also by process, we can see in the Society ways of working which fit in well with the dynamics of the early women's movement. The 'networking' and strong bonds of friendship which characterised so many women's organizations are very evident in the way in which the GFS Associates related to each other. They did not enter into paid work, as did some of Octavia Hill's group of housing workers, nor pioneer a new profession for women - and this is indicative of their higher class position - but some of them worked in an almost full-time capacity in the Society and certainly demonstrated women's capabilities in managing a large and complex organization.

The GFS seemed significant in the context of this study because it was a women's organization which provided housing to single working women on a large scale. However, it soon became apparent that it neither perceived of itself as feminist nor saw housing as its major aim, and it embraced values which in many ways seem antithetical to women's emancipation. Yet the work it did for women, its pride in being an all female society, and the enormous success of the Society can all be seen as very concrete contributions to raising the profile of women in society. As Brian Harrison points out:

> If women's emancipation is seen as operating only through self-consciously feminist movements, the GFS has no place in feminist historiography....Yet women's emancipation should not be seen solely in terms of feminist history: the GFS' contribution lay rather in expanding women's self respect, and in pioneering new opportunities for careers and usefulness.[123]

The GFS cannot be seen in isolation from the other women's organizations involved in rescue and preventative work in the period. It was the largest one, but it sat beside other women's societies, large and small, all of which provided accommodation as an

integral part of their work. They were all characterised by middle and upper-class women organizing to befriend their poorer sisters and they all held social purity uppermost in their aims. The rhetoric and ideology of these women seem somewhat alien to us today, but their work resulted in the provision of a vast range of accommodation lodges, homes and hostels for a group whose housing needs were otherwise overlooked. This was an important contribution to women's welfare, not least because it guarded the young women with whom they worked from homelessness - the subject of the next chapter.

NOTES

1. Edith Sellars, 'Women's Work for the Welfare of Girls in Women's Mission', A series of congress papers on the Philanthropic Work of women by eminent writers, edited by Baroness Burdett-Coutts, Sampson Low, Marston & Co., London, 1893, p.278

2. Ibid

3. Ibid, p.38

4. Ibid, p.39

5. Ibid

6. Revised handbook of lodging homes for women and girls contained in the Annual report of the National Association of Women's Lodging Homes, 1913

7. Edith Sellars, op.cit., pp.39-40

8. Ibid, p.34

9. Ibid

10. Ibid, p.42

11. Ibid

12. Ibid

13. *Friendly Leaves*, 1876-1917, *GFS Advertiser*, 1880-1882, *The GFS Associates' Journal and Advertiser*, 1882-1919, *Friendly Work*, 1883-1892, *Friendly Light: the Girls' Quarterly*, 1894-1901, *Our Letter*, 1901-1934

14. M E Townsend, Memories of a life, n.d.; Frederick and Mary Townsend, Sketches and impressions, 1901; Mrs Townsend, Some friends of the past, 1913; Kathleen M Townend,Some memories of Mrs Townsend, 1923, (GFS Archive 4/1)

15. Agnes Money, The history of the Girls' Friendly Society, 1897, (revised in 1905 and 1913)

16. Mary Heath-Stubbs, Friendship's Highway, being the story of the Girls' Friendly Society, 1875-1925, GFS Central Office, 1926

17. Brian Harrison, 'For Church, Queen and Family', in Past and Present, No 61, November 1963, pp.107-138

18. M E Townsend, An appeal to the mistresses of elementary schools from the GFS, Hatchards, 1882, p.7

19. An address delivered by Mary S Thornton at the Festival of Northampton branch, 11 July 1882, from Addresses delivered on the aims and objectives of the GFS, Hatchards, 1884

20. Report of the work and progress in the Girls' Friendly Society', 1885, p.7 cited in Brian Harrison, op cit, p.112

21. M E Townsend, The Girls' Friendly Society, n.d., p.2, cited in Brian Harrison, op cit, p.113

22. Elizabeth Vaughan Jones, The Girls' Friendly Society, 1875-1975, (pamphlet with no further details)

23. Contained in An appeal to the mistresses of elementary schools from the Girls' Friendly Society, Hatchards, 1882

24. Agnes Money, History of the Girls' Friendly Society, 1905, pp.15-16.

25. Ibid, p.16

26. An interesting footnote on attitudes to gender and language is provided in the different way in which committee members signed minutes of meetings. Mrs Townsend signed herself on various occasions as 'chair' and 'chairwoman', Agnes Money as 'chairman' and 'chairwoman' and Ellen Joyce and Lady Grey as 'chairwoman'. No comment was made on this so we do not know whether gendered terminology was considered significant or not.

27. Brian Harrison, op.cit., p.122

28. Elizabeth Vaughan Jones, op.cit.

29. Note of an address delivered by Mrs Townsend at a meeting of Associates at Fawsley on 28 March 1884, from Addresses delivered on the aims and objectives of the GFS, Hatchards, 1884, p.12

30. Brian Harrison, op.cit., p.109

31. Ibid

32. Ibid, pp.111-112.

33. Agnes Money, op.cit., p.57

34. Frank Prochaska, Women and philanthropy in nineteenth century England, Oxford University Press, 1980

36. The Girls' Friendly Society, reprinted from The Monthly Packet, 1877, p.3

37. Mary Heath Stubbs, 1925, p.66.

38. Letter sent to Diocesan Presidents by E Caroline Stamer, Head of Members' Department, 29 November 1906

39. Brian Harrison, op.cit., p.120.

40. Ibid, p.117

41. Ibid, p.120

42. Ibid

43. Ibid, p.124

44. Ibid, pp.124-5

45. In 1876 it is recorded that premiums of 2s 6d were paid at the Surbiton branch and 5s. at Sonningham, Friendly Leaves, 1876, Vol.II, No.15

46. Ibid, pp.124-5

47. Friendly Leaves, 1877, Vol.II, No.5, p.14

48. Brian Harrison, op.cit., pp.125-6

49. Mrs Roberts, The principle cause that prevents the middle classes from sympathising with the GFS', Addresses delivered on the aims and objectives of the GFS, Hatchards, 1884

50. Anne Mercier, untitled pamphlet, Hatchards, 1885, p.2.

51. See Mary Heath Stubbs, op.cit., ch.VI

52. Brian Harrison, op.cit., p.127

53. See the entry for Harriet Mason, The Europa Biographical Dictionary of British Women: over 1,000 notable women, Europa, 1983, pp.287-8

54. Julia Cartwright, (ed.), The Journals of Lady Knightley, 1911 in L Davidoff, The best circles: society, etiquette and the season, Croom Helm Ltd., 1973, p.174

55. Brian Harrison, op.cit., p.121

56. Friendly Leaves, 1880, Vol. 5, p.38

57. Brian Harrison, op.cit., p.121

58. See list printed in An appeal to the mistresses of elementary schools from the GFS, Hatchards, 1882

59. References in the minutes of various meetings show a more matter-of-fact, and even instrumental, approach to the involvement of royalty. In discussions leading up to the presentation of monies raised for the Lodges Fund in 1911, Mrs Campion said that 'big

Royalty' was needed to receive purses, and at another meeting, it was suggested, 'Cannot Royalty be got to give a sub?' Extreme deference may have been the outer face of the Society, but a less than reverential approach is shown in these private exchanges. (See Minutes of the Lodges Fund Sub-committee, 30 September 1908, GFS Archive, 1/37).

60. M E Townsend, A friendly letter to fathers and mothers about the GFS, Hatchards, 1883

61. Ibid, p.3

62. Brian Harrison, op.cit., p.128

63. M E Townsend, A friendly letter to mistresses of elementary schools, Hatchards, n.d., p.1

64. M E Townsend, 1883, op.cit., p.3

65. The Associates' List for 1892, for example, shows spinsters making up sixty-nine of the 109 Associates willing to visit members in London hospitals and seventy of the 159 prepared to meet members at stations. (Brian Harrison op. cit., p.122)

66. Brian Harrison, op.cit., p.122.

67. F Prochaska, op.cit., p.220

68. See M E Townsend, Some friends of the past, unpublished manuscript, 1913, (GFS archive 4/3)

69. See Agnes Money, op.cit., p.41

70. M E Townsend, Some friends of the past, 1913, unpublished manuscript,(GFS Archive, 4/3)

71. Ibid

72. M E Townsend, draft letter, 30 December 1877, (GFS archives, 4/13)

73. Mary Heath Stubbs, op.cit., p.20

74. Note of an address delivered by M E Townsend at a meeting of Associates at Fawsley on 28 March 1884, in Addresses delivered on the aims and objectives of the GFS, Hatchards, 1884, p.4

75. The Need for the Girls' Friendly Society, anonymous pamphlet, Strangeway & Sons, p.1.

76. Mary Heath-Stubbs, op.cit., p.29

77. M H Mason, The special purpose of the Girls' Friendly Society, read at a meeting in Nottingham, Hatchards, 1881, p.2

78. A Fried and R Elman, (eds.), Charles Booth's London, a portrait of the poor at the turn of the century drawn from his Life and Labour of the people in London, Hutchinson, London, 1969, p.177

79. Ibid, p.19

80. M E Townsend, Wanted: a place! A letter to GFS Members, 1881, p.1

81. Every railway station is the haunt of the procurer, or of a female creature of the species' wrote Mrs M A Mackirdy and M N Wallis in The white slave market, 1912

82. Joanna M Hill, Practial suggestions for the Department for GFS Candidates from workhouses and orphanages, Hatchards, p.5

83. M E Townsend, 1881, op.cit., p.3

84. William Stead, The Maiden tribute to modern Babylon, reprinted from the Pall Mall Gazette, 1885

85. F Prochaska lists among the organizations which lent their support to the cause: the Vigilance Association for the Defence of Personal Rights, the Social Purity Alliance, the Moral Reform Union, the National Vigilance Association, the National Association for the Care of Friendless Girls and the National Association for Women's Suffrage, (F Prochaska, op.cit., p.209)

86. Mary Heath-Stubbs, op.cit., p.219.

87. See F Prochaska, op.cit., p.212

88. Quoted in Judith Walkowitz, Prostitution and Victorian society: women, class and the state, Cambridge University Press, 1980, p.32

89. Mrs Pankhurst, *Suffragette*, 8 August 1913, quoted in A Rosen, Rise up women, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974, p.208

90. W T Stead, for example, estimated that there were in the region of 50,000 prostitutes in London, (Maiden tribute to modern Babylon, reprinted from the Pall Mall Gazette, 1885, p.2

91. Judith Walkowitz, op.cit.

92. See, for example, Rev Theodore Blocklehurst, The economics of hell, reprinted from The Spectator, 24 December 1912 in The white slave traffic, n.d., and Mrs M A Mackirdy and M N Wallis, The White slave market, 1912

93. M H Mason, op.cit., p.4

94. See the chapter on Josephine Butler in Margaret Forster, Significant sisters: the grass-roots of active feminism, 1839-1939, Penguin, 1986

95. J Walkowitz, op. cit.,p.33

96. Mrs Townsend, for example, wrote about George Eliot in the following terms: 'when we read that saddest of all life all life histories, the biography of George Eliot, can we help wondering what the career of her genius might not have been, had she fallen under the influence of other friends when she emerged an eager wondering girl, from the narrow stagnation of her country home?'(M E Townsend, Our girl workers, what can the GFS be to them?, Hatchards, n.d., p.3)

97. Eleventh annual report of the Local Government Board, 7 February - 2 December 1882, p.xiviii

98. M E Townsend, The Girls's Friendly Society, Hatchards, 1876, p.19

99. Mary Heath Stubbs, op.cit., p.43

100. M E Townsend, undated pamphlet, (GFS Archive, 4/12)

101. The GFS Reporter, 1876, p.7.

102. Of the other lodges listed four belonged to the Female Servants' Home Society, three to the YWCA, two to the Metropolitan Association for Befriending Young Servants, and thirteen were independent lodges. (M E Townsend, The Girls' Friendly Society, Hatchards, 1876, p.19)

103. Ibid

104. Figures derived from Mary Heath-Stubbs, 1926, and the minutes of various Lodgings Committees

105. M H Mason, The organization of the 'CWO' Department of the Girls' Friendly Society, Hatchards, n.d., p.5

106. See Mary Heath Stubbs, op.cit., p.65

107. M E Townsend, 1881, op.cit., pp.2-3

108. Appeal letter, Oxford GFS, 1911

109. Mary Heath-Stubbs, op.cit., p.42

110. It was not unusual in women's organizations of the time to have male treasurers and finance committees and the Women's Social and Political Union, for example, had a male treasurer, Frederick Pethick-Lawrence.

111. Minutes of the Committee concerning the proposed amalgamation of Lodges and Homes of Rest into one department, 3 December, 1907, (GFS Archive, 1/37)

112. Ibid

113. A newspaper cutting described the new hostel in the following terms, 'the building is extremely well-planned; there are bathrooms on almost every floor and domestic offices with newest contrivances for minimising labour. On the main floor there is a spacious hall for social gatherings, lectures, and entertainments, sitting-rooms for members and the lady principal's special sanctum. ('A new hostel for women', newspaper cutting contained in GFS Archive, 4/24)

114. There is a list of lodges included in Mary Heath-Stubbs' history of the GFS, but it is not clear whether they all provided accommodation.

115. The Revised handbook of Lodging Homes for women and girls, National Association of Women's Lodging Homes, 1913

116. For example, Kensington YWCA took 120 women, Southwark YWCA 100, Eastbourne 200, the Portman Home 112, the Salvation Army Hanbury Street shelter, 276 (Annual report of the National Association of Women's Lodging Homes, 1913)

117. GFS Canterbury Diocesan Quarterly Leaflet, 1906, p.2

118. Minutes of the Lodges Department Committee, 9 May 1913, (GFS Archive, 1/84)

119. Information derived from the annual reports of the Oxford Branch of the GFS

120. GFS pamphlet, nd

121. Mary Heath Stubbs, op.cit., p.18

122. GFS Report, n.d., no author

123. Brian Harrison, op. cit., p.120

CHAPTER 7

WOMEN AND HOMELESSNESS

I started out of the house that day, after having only been there for five months, with nothing but my mother's Bible, and a few little things tied up in a handkerchief. The season was over, and I was homeless, penniless, and with only the clothes I walked in.....what to do or which way to turn I did not know.
(Lucy Luck, straw-plait maker, c.1864[1])

The activities of women's organizations such as the Girls' Friendly Society ensured that a stratum of accommodation was available to 'respectable' working women, and in particular, to young women. However, there were a large number of women in housing need who did not fit into these categories - older women, discharged servants, laid-off workers, casually employed and itinerant women, and women who did not, or would not, conform to the ideal of 'virtuous maidenhood'. We have seen some of the reasons why women were vulnerable to homelessness and this chapter will explore what happened to women who actually became homeless.

It is difficult to establish the numbers of homeless women, both because the way in which homelessness is understood has changed over time, and because counts of people defined as homeless are notoriously unreliable. The places in which homeless people, or people who lived an unsettled existence, were to be found in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were the casual wards of workhouses, the cheaper range of common lodging houses, shelters, refuges and labour homes. Women appear as a small proportion of the users of these places and one of the questions which this chapter will address is whether the official figures represent a true picture of women's homelessness, or whether the conditions which existed in them affected women's ability, or willingness, to use them. It is also difficult to estimate the numbers of people who found refuge elsewhere or slept rough. Homeless people slept in barns, sheds,

tents, caravans or in the open air - under hedges or under arches. Women may have been particularly anxious to avoid such unsafe and exposed places and the numbers who took refuge with friends or relations are impossible to establish.

SOURCES

The most complete source of information on homelessness in the period is the report of the Departmental Committee on Vagrancy[2](DCV), a governmental body appointed in 1904 to investigate 'the alarming increase in the number of Vagrants seeking relief from the poor law casual wards'.[3] The Committee attributed this increase to the effects of the close of the South African Wars and the onset of a new trade depression.[4] It conducted a comprehensive review of the legislation and provision relating to vagrancy, gathering together figures from the 1860s onwards and hearing evidence from a number of expert witnesses. In 1905 it also commissioned its own national census of homelessness. The decennial national census of the population was not a great deal of help in establishing the numbers of homeless people. It enumerated people found in barns, sheds, tents, caravans and the open air, and also vagrants, beggars, gipsies and others of no stated occupation, but acknowledged that the counts of these groups 'arose in great part from imperfect returns'.[5] The Royal Commission on the Poor Laws (1905-9) also looked at the problem of vagrancy, drawing on much of the evidence given to the Departmental Committee. Charles Booth[6] and William Booth[7] wrote on the issue of homelessness, and the Charity Organization Society took a concerted interest in the subject.[8] There were also a number of 'undercover' investigations into homelessness carried out by journalists and concerned individuals.[9]

Little of this activity was focused on women. They were recorded in the figures for various forms of homeless provision, but less systematically so than men;[10] there is little analysis beyond numbers and very limited information on age, marital status,

occupation, or the reasons why women became homeless. For more in-depth investigation of women's homelessness, we have to look to the work of Mary Higgs, the only woman called to give evidence to the DCV.

The official silence on the issue of women's homelessness says much about the position of women in society. As David Brandon points out, while there has historically been a problem with women's homelessness, women's problems tend to be less sociologically 'noisy' than men's, and consequently, less attention is paid to them.[11] There are a number of reasons for this. First, anxiety about homelessness tended to be directed towards the visible presence of men on the streets. Mary Higgs said, 'one thousand, four hundred and sixty three men walking London streets in one night constitute a social danger'.[12] Women, on the other hand, do not represent the same threat as men in terms of potential crime and disorder, and concern was generally only directed towards girls and young women whom it was perceived lacked domestic and moral surveillance. Second, much of the concern around male homelessness was focused on its connection with unemployment, and as women were not seen as part of the productive work-force in the same way as men were, the fact of their unemployment - and consequent destitution - was not considered important. Third, as we shall see, much of women's homelessness was concealed, and they did not appear in great numbers in the vagrant population. This was largely due to the greater propensity of the poor law authorities to grant outdoor relief to women than to men, which, although meagre, allowed deserted and widowed wives and mothers, to remain in the locality, whereas men had to move on and look for work.[13]

All these factors meant that women's homelessness was considered to be comparatively unimportant, but while women may not have appeared in such numbers in the 'officially homeless' population, and did not present the same social threat when

they did, this does not mean that they did not experience particular problems with homelessness. In order to understand the various shades of experience which were contained under the heading of homelessness, it is important to establish what the term encompassed.

DEFINITIONS OF HOMELESSNESS

It is not easy either to define the term homeless, or to determine what it might have constituted in the period in question. There are a number of definitions of homelessness in use today, ranging from that of literally lacking a roof over one's head - sleeping out in the streets or other public places - to a broader interpretation encompassing the lack of permanent or secure accommodation, or accommodation of one's choice.[14] Homelessness, in late twentieth-century Britain is generally considered to be a disaster, a personal tragedy which represents the failure of our welfare system. Rarely, if ever, is it seen as representing any degree of choice or semblance of normality. Homelessness, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries however, was a different condition, and we cannot make the same judgements and distinctions over what it constituted.

In Victorian Britain the term 'homelessness' itself was seldom used, but rather references were made to the 'houseless poor'.[15] Insecurity and frequent movement between sets of lodgings were common for the poor, but the major difference between those who might have been considered homeless, or 'houseless', and those who were not, was that the housed population lived in rooms, or sets of rooms, for which they paid a weekly rent, and could have their family and their belongings around them. The 'houseless poor', on the other hand, were to be found in the casual wards of workhouses, common lodging houses and charitable shelters, all of which by their nature, were temporary, occupied on a nightly basis and shared with strangers. While

some of the people who resorted to such places did so because they had nowhere else to live, others did so because they were following established ways of life which entailed movement.

The title of the Departmental Committee on Vagrancy is telling in that it did not name the phenomenon which it was investigating as homelessness. The word vagrancy means no more than wandering, but it has come to have pejorative connotations. Vagrants were considered a nuisance; they were thought to be idle and often of criminal habits and it was feared that their way of life spread disease. They were seen very much as part of the 'undeserving poor', the 'residuum', and consequently attitudes towards them tended to be disapproving rather than sympathetic, and responses to their situation punitive, rather than constructive. The social Darwinism of the late nineteenth century, together with fears about the degeneration of the race, led to a hardening of attitudes towards vagrancy and to the suggestion of eugenic solutions, such as segregating the degenerate poor in labour colonies. More extreme strategies were discussed and the DCV heard evidence that 'another process suggested for dealing with tramps is the castration of the males'.[16]

Vagrancy was the source of official concern, but while vagrants constituted part of the homeless population, they were not the whole. There were also groups of people who were 'on the tramp' in search of work. The very structure of work meant that for many people, a migratory way of life was the norm. Travelling around the country following itinerant occupations, or seasonal work, was far more common than today. Raphael Samuel points out that in nineteenth century Britain:

> The distinction between the nomadic life and the settled one was by no means hard and fast. Tramping was not the prerogative of the social outcast as it is today; it was a normal phase in the life of entirely respectable classes of working men; it was a frequent resort of the out-of-

> works; and it was a very principle of existence for those who followed the itinerant callings and trades.[17]

Certain workers such as navvies, building labourers, travelling showmen, were essentially migratory and travelled around the country from job to job. There were also many other ways of earning a living which were necessarily itinerant: tinkers, hawkers, knife-grinders, umbrella-repairers and others, all moved around the country on a regular basis. All these groups, while primarily consisting of men, could also include women and children and whole families followed this migratory way of life.[18] However, for single women, there were fewer opportunities to earn a living in this way and women on their own who travelled were likely to be prostitutes, beggars or hawkers following a circuit of fairs, race meetings and local wakes.

As well as this year-round itinerant work, there was also a summer living to be made out of agricultural work. Large numbers of irregularly, or seasonally employed, people followed an annual cycle of moving out of the towns in the early summer to take part in market-gardening, hay-making, and fruit and hop-picking, returning to winter-quarters in town in the autumn.[19] The DCV stated that 'gypsies, hawkers, pedlars, hop-pickers and fruit-pickers were not considered as vagrants',[20] but since people moved in and out of these occupations at various times, it was not easy to quantify or define the boundaries of each group.[21] The Royal Commission on the Poor Laws made a distinction between urban and rural 'casuals'. Those that used casual wards in large towns were called the 'houseless poor - professional casuals', whereas those to be found in rural areas were designated 'wayfarers in search of work and permanent tramps'.[22] It seems likely, however, from the evidence of people travelling out of the towns on a seasonal basis, that there wassome crossover between these two groups.

Women were also found in the annual movement of seasonal workers into the countryside. A great deal of women's work was concentrated in the personal services sector, for example, in dress-making and laundering, and as such was tied to the social calendar of the middle and upper classes. As society moved out of town after the season, so this work dried up. Samuel points out that women and girls were also regularly thrown out of work each year by the summer closure of factories and workshops, and comments that, 'this is no doubt one of the reasons why women and girls figure so largely in the late summer movements out of town'.[23] Married women also took part in the annual migration to the countryside and indeed, until fairly recently, it was a regular East End tradition for whole families to go hop-picking in Kent each September. Fruit-picking, on the other hand, seems to have been more the province of itinerant girl labourers, who sometimes travelled long distances to find work. One account stated that 'the North Country girls....look forward to this fruit harvest ten miles from London to find them the means to form a little nest-egg to help them through the coming winter'.[24]

It is therefore problematic to describe such regular and habitual movement in search of work as constituting homelessness and undoubtedly people who lived in overcrowded towns for most of the year looked forward to their summer breaks. Mayhew, writing in 1861, quoted one girl he interviewed as saying, 'I do like to be in the country in the summer-time. I like haymaking and hopping, because that's a good bit of fun'. She went on however to say, 'it's the winter that sickens me'.[25] The fact that Mayhew interviewed her in the Metropolitan Asylum for the Houseless Poor demonstrates the downside of this itinerant way of life. While people regularly travelled in pursuit of work, and may have enjoyed their summer respite, this does not detract from the fact that the underlying determinant of their peregrinations was chronic insecurity and poverty.

NUMBERS

If the definition of homelessness presents problems, the quantification of it is equally difficult. In 1904 the DCV concluded that:

> The only figures at which we arrive is that the number of persons with no settled home and no visible means of subsistence probably reaches, at times of trade depression, as high a total as 70,000 or 80,000, while in times of industrial activity (as in 1900) it might not exceed 30,000 or 40,000.[26]

This broad estimate emphasised not only the cyclical nature of homelessness and its relationship to the economy, but also the problems of quantifying it. There are a number of difficulties in obtaining accurate figures on homelessness. The most obvious way to count homeless people is to go to the places to which they resort and to count the numbers there. Hence it is the population of casual wards, shelters and common lodging houses which the official figures focus upon. However, these figures are by no means inclusive. The poor law unions were required by the Local Government Board to make regular returns of the numbers of casual paupers relieved on the nights of 1st January and 1st July each year. This provides a base-line of trends over the period, but does not represent the total number of individuals who used casual wards over the course of the year. Common lodging houses and charitable shelters fell into the non-statutory sector and as no such regular national returns were made of their occupation, we only have the results of occasional censuses here. To a certain extent too, people have to choose to be counted and there are many places to which homeless people resort which are well out of the way of official eyes.[27] To sleep out without visible means of subsistence was an arrestable offence carrying a punishment of seven to fourteen days,[28] and people in these circumstances would not have been anxious to be detected.

Attempts at counting the homeless population beyond the casual ward were sporadic. Up to 1868 returns on the number of vagrants were collected on an annual basis by the different police forces of England and Wales. In that year a total of 36,179 people was recorded, undifferentiated by age or sex.[29] After 1868 this census was discontinued until in 1905 the DVC requested the police to make a count of persons without settled homes or visible means of subsistence. The count was carried out on the night of the 7 July and the results of this,[30] together with the figures of the population present in casual wards on the night of 1 July,[31] are shown below.

Table 2: DCV census of 1905 of persons without settled homes or visible means of subsistence on the night of 7/7/1905 and count of persons present in casual wards on the night of 1/7/1905

	Male	**Female**	**Children**	**Total**
In Common Lodging Houses	41,439 (87%)	4,869 (10%)	1,280 (3%)	47,588
Elsewhere	10,750 (73%)	2,436 (17%)	1,438 (10%)	14,624
Casual wards on night of 1.7.05	7,554 (88%)	813 7%	189 (2%)	8,556
Totals	60,745 (86%)	8,118 (11%)	2.907 (4%)	70,768
	Male/Female	**Male**	**Female**	
In common lodging houses	67%	68%	60%	
Elsewhere	21%	18%	30%	
In casual wards	12%	12%	10%	

In all,70,768 people were found to be without settled homes in the first week of July 1905 and, of these, the great majority were in common lodging houses. Those using the statutory provision made for vagrants, the casual ward, were a small minority, and it is noticeable that women, while only representing a small proportion of users in all categories, were in a higher proportion in the 'elsewhere' category than the other two.

It is important to bear in mind that the figures from such censuses represent only a historical snapshot of the population present on a certain night. On 1st January 1871, for example, 144 women were recorded as being present in the casual wards of the Metropolis. But the number of individual women recorded for the whole year was 13,572, which gives rather a different picture.[32] Occupation also varied considerably over the year, tending to be at its highest in the summer months, and lowest in the winter. Although at first sight this seems a little surprising, as one might have supposed that more people would seek shelter during the cold winter months, it reflects the fact that a considerable proportion of the people who used the casual wards were not habitual vagrants, but seasonal itinerants who were on the move during the summer. Mary Higgs, in her evidence to the DCV, also pointed out that figures relating to occupation of the casual wards on a national scale were 'comparatively useless'. This was because local variations in poor law policy meant that the numbers using the casual ward fluctuated according to the type of provision made, rather than reflecting the extent of the need.[33]

Homelessness then, took a variety of different forms and, to a certain extent, was a feature of working-class life, rather than an exceptional circumstance. It is difficult to quantify on a national scale, and even more difficult to gain an accurate and inclusive picture of the number of women who were homeless in the period, as attention was mostly focused on men. The following sections will look in turn at the main forms of provision for homeless people - casual wards, common lodging houses, night shelters and labour homes - and present what figures we have of female occupation.

CASUAL WARDS

Casual wards were attached to workhouses and were intended to provide temporary accommodation for any person claiming to be destitute who was not recognised as

local.[34] No provision had been made for this group in the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 because it was thought by the Commissioners that 'the assurance that no one need perish from want would repress the vagrant and mendicant by disarming them of their weapon - the plea of impending starvation'.[35] However, this was a false hope and vagrancy proved to be a continual nuisance to local poor law unions who were obliged to relieve vagrants within the workhouse. This was found unsatisfactory on two counts: first, because the wandering poor, by definition, were not local and yet had to be relieved out of local funds and second, because their often verminous and diseased condition, in addition to their sometimes disruptive behaviour, was deemed to make them unsuitable companions for the more permanent residents of the workhouse. As a result, the Homeless Poor Acts of 1864-65 were passed requiring Guardians to provide casual wards to the satisfaction of the central authority. By the Edwardian period there were 638 casual wards placed throughout England and Wales[36] at intervals of about ten or twenty miles apart which was considered to be within a day's tramping distance. This was in order that people travelling in search of work could have a night's rest and food on their journey.

This apparent benevolence was, however, misleading. In parallel with the idea that people on the road were in search of work and, therefore, deserved relief, was the more prevalent view that they were a group of hardened criminals, beggars and 'loafers' who used the casual ward to scrounge off local rates and to avoid work.[37] In order, therefore, to deter the lazy and workshy, the regime was made increasingly penal. The food and bedding provided were minimal, a task of work was imposed and users were compulsorily detained for at least a day. Initially users were allowed to leave the casual ward after one night, but this was subsequently extended to a period of detention of two nights in the case of a first admission, and four nights for a second

admission in one month in any casual ward in the same union. The Royal Commission on the Poor Laws commented that this detention of four nights and five days was:

> Nearly the equivalent of what the prison authorities construe as a sentence of a week's imprisonment. But the habitual inmate of a Casual Ward, prefers a sentence of imprisonment to the severity of the more vigorous wards.[38]

The regime was indeed severe. A vagrant had first to seek out a relieving officer, or in some areas a police officer, in order to obtain an order for admission. This was not automatic and could be refused if it was suspected that the vagrant had alternative means of support. They could also be taken before the magistrates and charged with various vagrancy offences. If successful in obtaining an order, they then had to make their way to the casual ward and queue for admission, not before 4pm in winter and 6pm in summer, and face another interrogation from the admitting clerk. On admission they were searched, their personal possessions taken away from them, their own clothes removed to be 'stoved' (in order to destroy vermin) before they were given a compulsory bath, fed and locked in for the night. During the next day, or period of days, inmates had to carry out a work task, hard manual labour for men, stone-breaking or pumping water, and oakum-picking or washing and cleaning for women.[39]

The main aim of this regime was deterrence and it appears to have been an effective one. The humiliating procedures involved, the inadequate food and the imposition of a task of work on people already exhausted by tramping, meant that only the most desperate would enter the casual ward. W H Davies, in his account of his life on the road, *The autobiography of a supertramp*, wrote, 'whatever luck I had, good or bad, I always managed to escape the workhouse; and was determined to walk all night if needs be, rather than seek refuge in one of those places'.[40] As we have seen figures show that only about one-eighth of the total homeless population were to be found in

casual wards. Indeed, the conclusion of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws' investigations into vagrancy in 1909 was that 'the result of the deterrent administration of the Casual Ward is that the vagrants remain outside'.[41]

Little information was gathered on the circumstances of those people relieved in casual wards, but in 1865 the Inspectors of the Poor Law Board were instructed to make reports to the Local Government Board upon the arrangements in their respective areas for dealing with vagrants, and they took the opportunity to comment upon their character and behaviour. With few exceptions, the tone was one of moral outrage. Vagrants were characterised as 'vile and troublesome,'[42]'thieves and prostitutes',[43] and 'thorough idle scamps'.[44] The reports were as scathing about women casual paupers as about men. 'The females appear to be disreputable characters',[45] said one Inspector. 'I have every reason to believe that as a general rule they are prostitutes of the lowest class' said another.[46] From the vagrant wards at Liverpool though, came a different report, 'it frequently happens that respectable female servants out of place are reduced to the last extremity before entering here'.[47] This testifies to the vulnerable position of domestic servants out of a place, and the use of the word 'frequently' indicates that the casual ward was not just the refuge of prostitutes or women accompanying men. It also illustrates the pitch of desperation which had to be reached before most women would consider entering the casual ward.

There was little investigation into the numbers and circumstances of women using casual wards. Returns were not always broken down by sex, so we only have sporadic information on the numbers of women, and little on their circumstances. Numbers were small in comparison to men throughout the period, but they grew proportionately with the overall rise in figures. On 1st January 1871 there were 354 women compared to 2,470 men,[48] on 1st January 1891, 553 women and 4,204 men

and on 1st January 1905, 887 women and 8,693 men.[49] In other words, women frequenters of casual wards consistently represented only about one eighth to one tenth of the total. We have little information beyond these bare statistics. The Departmental Committee on Vagrancy provided one analysis of age which showed that on 1st January 1905 out of the total of 887 women, 132 were aged from 16-34, 660 from 35-64 and 95 were aged 65 and over.[50] This is a similar profile to that of the men using casual wards, and it is difficult to infer much from such broad categories. There is no information on the marital status of these women, but a number must have been accompanied by children, as children under the age of sixteen were recorded in casual wards at every count.

Far fewer women than men used the casual wards. The DCV stated that:

> The inference is that women and children sleep elsewhere, and this has been confirmed by counts which from time to time have been made of the vagrant population as a whole. These counts show far larger proportions of women and children than is found in Poor Law returns.[51]

This is significant as it indicates that the official counts of homelessness severely under-estimated the numbers of homeless women and that women were anxious to avoid the casual ward where possible. There are a number of possible reasons for this: the stigma of homelessness was greater for women than for men, especially because of its association with prostitution, the enforced moving on was more difficult for them, particularly if they were accompanied by children, and the lack of amenities to keep themselves and their clothes clean, militated against their possibilities of finding employment as domestic workers. The physical conditions which prevailed may also have been less acceptable to women and there are accounts which show that casual wards could be very sordid places.

In 1866 a woman using the alias of 'Ellen Stanley' stayed in two London casual wards for women in the guise of a homeless woman, the first example we have of a woman carrying out such an undercover investigation.[52] She discovered:

> Bedding of straw-filled canvas bags laid in wooden troughs, crawling with vermin in overcrowded, ill-ventilated wards; a single latrine bucket in the ward, with women queuing all night with cramps and diarrhoea; [1866 was the time of a national cholera epidemic] no washing facilities, soap or towels; skilly and almost inedible black bread as a meal; and the oakum task interrupted by women picking vermin off their clothes and bodies.[53]

Greater governmental regulation meant that such appalling conditions subsequently improved, but Mary Higgs, when she repeated Ellen Stanley's undercover investigations in 1903, found that casual wards were still often dirty and comfortless places.[54] Furthermore, the regime which prevailed there made them particularly undesirable for women as they were exposed to bullying and sexual advances, both from male poor law officials and male paupers. She also made the point that once in this sub-strata of society, women found it particularly difficult to escape. Without a reference from a previous employer, lacking the facilities to be able to present a respectable appearance to prospective employers and forced to move on every few days, homeless women were trapped in a downward spiral.

However, not all the women present in casual wards were helpless victims. Mary Higgs, when asked by the DCV whether she thought that any woman enjoyed the life of a vagrant, replied, 'Yes, they tell me it a very happy kind of life.....'[55] Here we see a counterbalance to the view of women vagrants as a miserable and vulnerable group, one which accords them some agency of their own. No doubt there is truth in both these representations; it is probable that women travelling in the company of male partners lived a more protected life than that of single women, and that women who had been accustomed to this way of life from childhood found it more congenial than those suddenly thrust into destitution. For this group, a stay in a casual ward may have

formed part of their travels when they could not afford anything else, or did not want to sleep out, but it was not the unmitigated disaster that it would have been to the 'respectable servant girl' who had lost her place.

The DCV was not greatly exercised over the question of female vagrancy. It concluded that:

> We are inclined to accept the view that the question of female vagrants is comparatively unimportant and if the men are removed, the women and children will soon disappear from the roads. Without the men, the women will find it easy to maintain themselves, and their case will present little difficulty.[56]

It is not clear whether women were considered 'comparatively unimportant' because of the small numbers involved, or because they represented a lesser social problem than men, or a mixture of the two. The Committee recommended that women and children should be received within the workhouse proper rather than into casual wards, stating that they were confirmed in this opinion by the evidence they received from Mary Higgs as to the unsatisfactory treatment of female casuals.[57] The recommendation was not put into practice and women continued to be received into the casual wards.

Casual wards represented the state's obligation to provide shelter to the destitute, but they were the casual wards of workhouses and provided no more than the minimum, in an atmosphere which eroded self-respect. The harsh conditions which prevailed there deterred most people, both men and women, from using them. However, the enforced moving on was a greater disadvantage for women than for men and they represented only a small proportion of the numbers using casual wards. Where women were to be found in greater numbers was in the common lodging houses, the major resort of the 'houseless poor' in the period.

COMMON LODGING HOUSES

Common lodging houses existed in towns all over the country with the greatest concentration in London, where, in 1889, there were a thousand lodging houses with accommodation for 31,651 persons.[58] Most of the provision was for men, but there were also mixed houses and women-only houses. There was no definition in law of what constituted a common lodging house. According to R A Valpy, who investigated common lodging houses on behalf of Charles Booth, it could 'roughly be defined to be a house in which beds are let out for the night, or by the week, in rooms where three or more persons not belonging to the same family may sleep at the same time'.[59] He also pointed out that this is a wide definition and that 'from the luxury of the West End residential club to the "fourpenny doss" of Burger Street or Shorts Gardens' was 'but a matter of degree'.[60]

Not all lodging houses were undesirable and not all were frequented by the very poor.[61] The cheaper lodging houses were decidedly undesirable, however, and conditions in them, very basic. Generally, there was a basement kitchen with communal dormitories upstairs, in which inmates often had to share beds - if they had them. John Simon wrote that 'within your worst quarters, there is little knowledge of beds',[62] and there were a number of places in which people slept sitting up all night. Probably the most basic of all were 'rope-houses'. In *Pickwick Papers*, Sam Weller described his experiences of such a house which, allowing for poetic licence, gives a vivid illustration of the term:

> Wen the lady and gen'lm'n as keeps the Hotel first begun business, they used to make the beds on the floor; but this woulnt'd do at no price, cos instead o'taking a moderate two-pennorth of sleep, the lodgers used to lie there half the day. So now they has two ropes, bout six foot apart, and three from the floor, which goes right down the room; and the beds are made of slips of coarse sacking, stretched across them....At six o'clock every morning they lets go the ropes at one end, and down falls all the lodgers. Consequence is, that being thoroughly waked, they get up very quietly, and walk away![63]

Being commercial enterprises, lodging houses were not in the business of deterring potential customers and they operated a much laxer regime than did casual wards - so lax over matters of hygiene and segregation of the sexes that they were a cause of scandal throughout the nineteenth century. Attempts at regulation were made; the 1851 Common Lodging Houses Act, steered through Parliament by Lord Shaftesbury, made them subject to registration and inspection by the police, and the 1875 Public Health Act granted powers to local authorities outside the metropolis to register and inspect lodging houses. However, the legislation was permissive rather than mandatory, and it was estimated by the DCV in 1906 that more than a quarter of rural districts and three-quarters of urban districts were without any bye-laws on the subject.[64] Many common lodging houses thus escaped either registration or inspection.

Those that used the cheaper range of common lodging houses were considered social outcasts. The Departmental Committee on Vagrancy commented that 'vagrants who frequent shelters and cheaper lodging houses appear to be a lower class than the casual pauper',[65] and Valpy states that 'on the whole the typical inhabitants of an ordinary common lodging house belong to the lowest scale of humanity...'[66] Despite the opinion of such commentators, figures show that the homeless poor preferred the common lodging house to the austere regime of the casual ward. The DCV census of 7th July 1905 counted 47,588 people present in lodging houses,[67] compared to 8,556 persons present in casual wards on the night of 1st July 1905,[68] which shows a ratio of roughly six to one.

The overwhelming preference for the poor for the lodging house over the casual ward is not difficult to understand. Unlike the casual ward, no names were taken, no questions were asked, and any person able to pay could obtain a bed for the night.[69]

There were no irksome regulations such as compulsory searching and bathing. The stigma of pauperism was avoided, and perhaps most importantly of all, no task of labour was demanded and no period of detention imposed. The DCV cited this lack of restrictions as the reason why a greater number of vagrants resorted to common lodging houses than to casual wards.[70] Accommodation was provided for men, women and married couples, or couples purporting to be married. Unlike in casual wards, couples were not separated, and the recording of children in the totals for lodging houses suggests that families were accommodated.

The DCV census of 1905 recorded sixty per cent of the total female homeless population as present in common lodging houses. Again they were greatly outnumbered by men. Figures quoted for London for 1905, show 21,055 males, 1,578 females and 357 married couples using common lodging houses,[71] a proportion of just over twenty men to every woman. As with the records for the casual wards, we have little information on the women who used them. The figures point to the fact that women preferred the common lodging house to the casual ward, probably for the same reasons as men, but for women the more relaxed domestic arrangements may have had some extra attraction. Unlike casual wards, they were not forced out of their accommodation after a limited period, and could come and go as they pleased during the day. They could also bring in and cook their own food, and the DCV gives this as one of the few advantages that women enjoyed over men. 'Women for the same daily expenditure appear to live somewhat better than men', it was said, 'due to the fact that women club together to a greater extent, and are thus able to spend their money to better advantage'.[72] Greater knowledge of domestic affairs may have been a factor here, but a degree of female co-operation and mutual help was also involved.

Although more women were to be found in lodging houses than in casual wards, they were still in a tiny minority there. The small proportion of women using common lodging houses may have been a reflection of the lesser demand of women for such places, but it also demonstrated the gendered nature of the provision. There were fewer beds for women than for men, and those which existed were more expensive than were men's. In London, by the turn of the century, in addition to the commercial lodging houses for men, there were three municipal lodging houses for men provided by the LCC, but none for women, and there were five Rowton Houses which provided superior accommodation for working men, but again none for women.[73] The DCV stated that women as a rule had to pay 6d for a bed whereas men paid 5d or 4d. The breakdown given of the charges made in common lodging houses and shelters[74] in London at the time of the DCV (see Appendix 11) shows that beds at 5d or under constituted 63% of the total beds available for men and 20% for women, and that beds priced 6d to 1s constituted 37% of the range for men compared to 80% for women.

Women were clearly disadvantaged by such pricing. Questioned by the Departmental Committee on whether the dearth of lodging house accommodation for women did not prove a lack of demand, Mary Higgs replied, 'I do not think that you could look to private interest to provide for this great need, because these women are often so extremely poor'.[75] The precarious position of women in cheap lodging houses is illustrated by interviews with women cited in the DCV: 'EB ...would sleep on a doorstep tonight if not given money for a bed....KH, a lodger, has no money left and will have to "rough it tonight" as she cannot pay for a bed'.[76] And it is to be remembered that Jack the Ripper's victims lived in the common lodging houses of Whitechapel. Mary Higgs also pointed out that women resorted to cheap lodging houses through lack of alternatives, and that where women-only charitable shelters existed, there was great demand for them.[77]

Women-only common lodging houses existed in the commercial sector, but they did not necessarily offer a safe refuge, as the descriptions of Charles Booth's investigations into common lodging houses show:

> Number 8 [Parker Street] is a lodging house for women. An underground room, reached by stairs from the entrance passage, serves as the common kitchen and is about eleven feet by thirteen feet. In this room is a large red hot coke fire, and round about are rough tables and benches. Here at times may be seen about twenty women with matted hair, and face and hand most filthy, whose ragged clothing is stiff with accumulation of beer and dirt, their underclothing, if they have any at all, swarming with vermin. Many of them are often drunk. These women are thieves, beggars and prostitutes. If any woman from the country is unfortunate enough to come amongst them she will surely be robbed of all that can be taken from her, and then, unfit for anything else, may fall to the level of the rest.[78]
>
> Number 19 Macklin Street was 'a desperate place....the lowest of those for men would be preferable.[79]
>
> Number 23 Parker Street has been a lodging house for women for 11 years.....No crime under heaven can have escaped being committed in this place at one time or another.[80]

There is a certain element of horrified fascination evident here, and the comments about women's underwear make one wonder about the gendered nature of the observation. The places described were perhaps extreme examples, but Thor Fedur, writing in 1879, also commented on the criminal nature of women's lodging houses, saying that female peddlars there were in particular danger of being assaulted or even murdered for the contents of their baskets.[81] Far from offering protection for women, or any higher standards of decency, women-only lodging houses appear to have been positively dangerous places.

The worst conditions, or at least the ones most reported on, were found in London. Charles Booth characterised areas of central London and the East End, as 'streets filled with common lodging houses - streets of furnished apartments - streets of small

houses, the home of thieves'.[82] In contrast with these grim descriptions, it appears from contemporary accounts that lodging houses outside the capital may have been rather more cheerful places. W H Davies, in his account of his time on the road, describes spending an evening in a common lodging house in Rugby:

> Now several women were at this place; some of them were married and some single, and most of them made and sold fancy work of embroidery..... What a merry lot of beggars were assembled here; and how busy they all seemed to be, making articles for sale, and washing and mending their clothes![83]

This gives rather a different flavour of lodging house life, in which companionability and industry are the keynotes, rather than misery and degradation. Mary Higgs, in her accounts of the lodging houses in which she stayed also describes men, women and children consorting together in a fairly companionable way.[84] While concerned to show the undesirable elements of this way of life, the dirt and squalor that existed and, above all, the sexual dangers which existed for single women, she also, perhaps unwittingly, gives a picture of a fairly sociable milieu with communal singing in the kitchens in the evenings and people swapping stories of their day on the road.[85] While Mary Higgs disapproved of the bad language, the tales of sexual exploits and the free and easy relations between men and women, for many it was clearly preferable to the casual ward with its enforced separation of the sexes, and harsh regulations.

The evidence shows that where choice existed, women opted for the common lodging house over the casual ward. They had to pay for their beds in lodging houses, but there was no compulsory task of labour, no locking in and none of the degrading procedure of the casual ward. The fact that length of stay was

not restricted meant that women could live in them and while some followed a circuit of lodging houses around the country in pursuit of their own, or their partners' occupations, they could to a certain extent make a home there. What is apparent is that there was a great contrast between the experiences of married and single women. Married couples could stay together and have their children with them, they could cook and eat together, and have some semblance of a family life. For single women the picture was very different, and the women-only lodging houses appear to have been places of great degradation. It is clear that many of the single women in the cheaper houses earned a living through prostitution, or begging, and others through casual work or hawking - and presumably some women moved between these categories as circumstances demanded. When funds failed, and the cheapest lodging house was not a possibility, the only other option open to the homeless poor in seeking a roof was to find refuge in a night shelter.

SHELTERS AND LABOUR HOMES

Night shelters, or refuges, for the houseless poor had existed in London since the early nineteenth century.[86] They were run by charitable organizations, and were free, or very cheap, at 1d or 2d a night, and in some cases beds could be earned in return for labour. Although conditions in them were very basic, there were no regulations such as detention or compulsory labour. By the 1860s there were seven night shelters in London[87] and one in each of the provincial towns of Birmingham, Manchester and Edinburgh. Over the next forty years the provision for homeless people increased substantially and by the time the DCV reported in 1906 there were at least twenty three charitable shelters and homes in London providing accommodation for 2,489 males and 453 females.[88]

The reason for this growth was two-fold - firstly, the numbers of homeless people increased over the period and secondly, attitudes towards them began to change. The problem of homelessness became more acute with the trade depression of the 1880s, and homeless people became more visible on the streets of London. According to William Booth, 'the existence of these unfortunates was somewhat rudely forced upon the attention of society in 1887 when Trafalgar Square become the camping ground of the Homeless Outcasts of London'.[89] 1887 was a year of acute economic distress and appears to have marked a turning point in attitudes to the homeless. The Royal Commission on the Poor Laws commented:

> Down to about 1887 it seems to have been habitually taken for granted that the efforts of the charitable ought to be properly directed to helping and relieving the distressed persons of good character whose record would bear investigation, who had not drunk or stolen or gambled, and whose misfortune had been brought about through no fault of their own. Those who could not stand these tests - classed as the unworthy and undeserving poor - were to be left to the Poor Law.[90]

However, the failure of the Poor Law to meet the need was evident and 'to the fervent Christian', the Royal Commission said, 'there came the impulse to succour not well-conducted and respectable alone, but even the undeserving, the weak, the outcast, the fallen'.[91]

The great motor for this change was the establishment of the social-work arm of the Salvation Army which brought with it both a very different approach to the homeless poor and also the application of a military style operation to the problem. William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, rejected the State's attempts to deal with the destitute as inadequate and inhumane:

> Legally the state accepts the responsibility of providing food and shelter for every man, woman and child who is utterly destitute. This responsibility it, however, practically shirks by the imposition of conditions on the claimants of relief that are hateful and repulsive, if not impossible.[92]

He responded by establishing a system which cared for them instead. In *Darkest England and the Way Out* (1890) he described the extent of chronic poverty in Britain and set out his blue-print for the redemption of the poor. This detailed a complex scheme of shelters, training homes, labour colonies and emigration aimed at rescuing men and women from destitution and restoring them to society. Spiritual salvation was the aim, but General Booth believed that the body needed succour before the soul could be redeemed. Importantly, as the Royal Commission pointed out, the Salvation Army did not distinguish between the deserving and undeserving poor, but sought to help all, indiscriminately. This approach did not find much favour among the advocates of the Poor Law and the Charitable Organization Society, who believed that indiscriminate help demoralised the poor and increased the propensity to pauperism,[93] but it struck a chord with the public, and funds poured in to help the Salvation Army with its work.

In 1887 the first of the Salvation Army food and shelter depots was opened in London and within a few years it had grown to a national (and international) organization running shelters and homes in London and the provinces. By 1891 there were five Salvation Army shelters in London[94] and by 1914 this had increased to twenty three shelters and labour homes.[95] The Church Army, an Anglican organization, followed suit, and in 1889 opened the first of their labour homes, and by 1909 they were running about fifty such homes throughout the country, 'deliberately relieving all and sundry in distress'.[96] According to the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws the result was, 'a whole series of philanthropic agencies in London and most large towns, providing for the destitute able-bodied'.[97]

Both the Church Army and Salvation Army made efforts to reach out to all women in housing need, including prostitutes, and offered a programme of rehabilitation through

employment and training . By 1914 the Salvation Army had fifteen homes for women in London, including four industrial homes, a knitting home, two homes for inebriates, three maternity homes and a hostel for girls[98] and the Church Army had fourteen homes, including three rescue homes, a needlework home, a laundry home, a training home for young servants and a shelter.[99]

Mary Higgs, who was a personal friend of William Booth, stayed in a number of Salvation Army homes in her disguise as a homeless woman. She was impressed both by their kindly approach and their standards of cleanliness. She pointed out, as we have seen, that where Salvation Army provision was available for women, there was great demand for it. They took only women inmates and were staffed by female officers who were committed to the welfare of their charges, and women there had no need to fear bullying or sexual harassment. Mary Higgs also emphasised that no prying questions were asked, and the privacy of the women was respected, often the last remnant of dignity they had left.[100] 'Poor thing!' she said, of an applicant to a Salvation Army shelter, 'the only thing that belongs to her is her past'.[101]

The shelters and labour homes of the Salvation Army and the Church Army provided a way out of the dead end of homelessness represented by common lodging houses and casual wards and offered a very real refuge for vulnerable women and girls fleeing from abuse in their own homes. An analysis of Salvation Army 'Girls' Statements' made between February and August 1886 in London shows that out of a total of ninety-five cases of girls coming to them for help, sexual abuse was recorded as the reason for homelessness in thirty seven of them.[102] For victims such as these for whom there was no protection within the Poor Law, the Salvation Army provided a vital social service. The fact that users of such provision had to submit themselves, willingly or unwillingly, to the religious regime that existed there may well have been

a price worth paying for the higher standard of accommodation and safety that such hostels provided.

Interestingly, the number of homes and shelters for women in London considerably outnumbered those for men. A report on the provision for the homeless poor in London in 1913 listed sixty three 'co-operating agencies', thirty eight of which were for women, twenty two for men and three which were mixed.[103] However, the figures given for total bed occupation of the hostels and shelters in London show that men far outnumbered women, (see Appendix 12) so the hostels which existed for women must have been much smaller places, approximating more to homes than to institutions perhaps, and this may in part account for women's greater readiness to use them.

Although women used Salvation and Church Army provision where it was available, the numbers of women staying in shelters and labour homes remained low. There are no national figures available, but figures from London show that on one night in 1910, the peak year for homelessness in the capital, there were a total of 899 men and 273 women occupying free beds in shelters, 1,405 men and 194 women in Labour Homes and 2,510 men and 220 women in the streets or sitting up in shelters (see Appendix 11). On the same night there were 928 men present in casual wards and 173 women, which underlines the fact that more people resorted to shelters than to casual wards. There is little information on the circumstances of the women in the shelters, but a census carried out in 1891 of nine charitable refuges in London, (only a partial sample), gave a breakdown of the sex and marital status of inmates which showed striking differences between men and women. 712 men and 193 women were present, and of those men who gave information, 36 were married, 602 were single, and 36 widowed; of the women who gave information 27 were married, 69 single and 80 widowed. There are huge differences in the proportions of men and women in each

of these categories, but what stands out is the far higher proportion of single men compared to single women, and the higher proportion of widows as compared to widowers.

The stage of destitution represented by shelters was probably a more accurate indication of homelessness in the cities than that provided by the population of casual wards as they were much more immediately accessible. No doubt there were many reasons why women found themselves in these places of last resort, but sheer poverty is the fact that stands out. Labour homes, which took their clientele from the shelters, offered a route out of such destitution and it is clear that the provision made by the Salvation Army and the Church Army was in demand with women. The growth in such provision reflected the growth in the numbers of homeless people and also a different approach towards them. Despite the expansion in this sector, figures show that men, women and children could still be found sleeping out-of-doors because they had nowhere else to go.

SLEEPING OUT

The final destination of the homeless poor was the streets, and they were found there every night of the year. In summer this is not a true gauge of absolute destitution, as on hot nights many people voluntarily chose to sleep out, even if they had accommodation, as the conditions inside their overcrowded and stuffy rooms were unbearable.[104] The true test of absolute destitution was the winter, as sleeping out then carried the risk of death from exposure. The LCC carried out nine censuses of of homeless people between 1904 and 1913, including in their counts those sleeping out of doors. On the night of 29th January 1904 a census taken in parts of London showed 100 males and 68 females sleeping on staircases, in doorways, or under arches, and 1,463 males and 116 females, 46 boys and six girls 'appearing to

be spending the night in the streets'.[105] The former figure, for those under semi-shelter, shows that over half of them were women, a far higher proportion of women to men than comparative figures for any other place in which homeless people were found. It is difficult to know whether this was significant or not as the figures are so small, but possibly these women were sleeping in the vicinity of their last home, or felt safer in a building than actually on the streets. While alcohol and mental health problems may have played a part in the reasons for people sleeping out, the greater representation of women in this last stage of homelessness may also reflect women's comparative helplessness when faced with sudden and complete destitution.

We must assume that the figures given for those sleeping out are an underestimate. We must also assume that the enumerators of the LCC were able to distinguish between those women sleeping out of doors for want of anywhere else to go, and those who were on the streets for the purposes of prostitution. It must not be forgotten that the poorest and least successful prostitutes lacked any form of accommodation. William Booth talked of the women of the Woolwich 'dusthole', who lived out of doors and sold themselves to sailors for a crust of bread.[106]

Sleeping out was punishable by law if the offender was without visible means of subsistence, and in 1904 11,785 people were prosecuted for this offence.[107] The worst consequence was death and there is a report for 1884 which lists thirty seven deaths from starvation in the Metropolis - sixteen men, nineteen women and two children,[108] (see Appendix 13). Ten of these women had no addresses, five were recorded as found dead or dying in the streets, and four of these deaths were said to have been accelerated by intemperance. Their ages ranged from twenty four to seventy six, with twelve of the women being in their fifties or sixties. This is the only

report on deaths in the streets I have located and I do not know whether this was a typical year or not, but such deaths show the final grim reality of homelessness.

The question remains, why, in a society in which women were economically disadvantaged, and were generally dependent upon male relatives or employers for their housing, did so few women show up in the statistics as homeless? Apart from under-reporting, there are a number of factors which might explain this. Perhaps most importantly, there were social and economic forces at work which meant that much of women's homelessness was hidden. Domestic service, the biggest source of employment for women, housed a great number of single working women, provided a constant demand for women's labour and was less subject to fluctuations of trade than the male equivalent of labouring.[109] Women with children to support were much more likely to receive outdoor relief than were men and this enabled them to subsist in the locality. Prostitution was also always there for women as a means of supplementing wages, or preventing complete destitution, and this was one way of securing a roof over one's head, to which men did not generally have recourse. In connection with this there was a host of rescue homes and penitentiaries for prostitutes which provided accommodation for women who would otherwise have been on the streets. And as we have seen, there was also a range of homes and hostels for respectable young women which provided a buffer for them from homelessness.

There are other factors which may explain why few women resorted to provision for homeless people. Rose suggests that the overwhelming disparity between male and female vagrants can be accounted for by the fact that 'men were more venturesome and footloose, and women more home-rooted; women tended to put up with home stresses whereas men were more likely to walk out'.[110] There is probably some truth in this and certainly women with dependent children were less likely either to abandon

them or to trail them round a series of casual wards and lodging houses. The Royal Commission on the Poor Laws stated that 'the wives will sometimes do anything to keep the home together, while the husband loaves'.(sic)[111] Social, psychological and emotional factors all combined to make home and family much more difficult for women to abandon than for men. There was also considerable stigma for women detached from home and the fact that the expression 'on the streets' equates with prostitution indicates this. Attitudes were more condemnatory of women and Mrs Cecil Chesterton, writing in the 1920s of women's homelessness, made the salient point:

> A man out of work arouses sympathy, for women hostility - dirt is romantic in man, but implies degradation, neglect, an obstinate refusal to undertake the obligations of her sex for woman.[112]

The stigma of homelessness was less for men and life on the road even had some romantic connotations for them. Rose points out that there was a double-edged attitude towards male tramps with, on the one hand, fear of the 'menacing wild man of the woods' and on the other, envy of them as 'the personification of freedom'.[113] For men the freedom and irresponsibility of an untrammelled wandering life could be attractive. There were other advantages for men and George Atkins Brines, (1812-1883), a male tramp who wrote an account of his life, cited sexual freedom as 'one of the many charms that induce men to continue to tramp'.[114]

For most women it was a different story - a life on the road was one of degradation, squalor and danger. Not only was the lack of the financial support of a male partner critical in determining whether women became vulnerable to homelessness, it also played a large role in determining the sorts of experiences to which women were exposed if they became homeless. For single women the experience was particularly demoralising and degrading. Without a male companion, they were exposed to a level

of sexual exploitation and physical danger, which married women, or women with an established relationship with a man, generally escaped.

CONCLUSIONS

The figures we have of homelessness in the period are inconsistent, patchy and partial. Apart from the investigations of the DCV, they were gathered at different dates and for different purposes; most of the evidence is for the latter part of the period and much of it is focused on London, so it is difficult to get a national picture. The figures culled from official sources show that women appeared in all the forms of provision open to homeless people, and were also to be found sleeping rough. Numbers varied between these categories, but they were very small in all of them.

Because of the lack of more concrete evidence, it is difficult to do more than speculate on the reasons for variations between the different groups. On the basis of numbers, the common lodging house appeared to be the preferred option of those who could scrape together the few pence required for a bed for the night; while many of them were sordid, and sometimes, dangerous places, women could live there and maintain some sort of independence. Casual wards were used by fewer women and as their regime was so harsh, and constant moving-on was imposed, it seems likely that most of the women using these were on the tramp, begging or following itinerant occupations, although there were also women present for whom homelessness was a sudden and unexpected disaster. Night-shelters, which were based in towns, provided for those who were completely destitute, and took women who either regularly used them in winter months, or who unexpectedly became homeless. From the late 1880s onwards, labour homes run by organizations such as the Salvation Army and the Church Army provided rehabilitative accommodation for women and the

evidence of Mary Higgs indicates that, where these existed, women used them in preference to other sorts of accommodation.

Not all of the women who were counted in casual wards, lodging houses and shelters would necessarily have considered themselves homeless, and self-definition is clearly an important factor in deciding whether or not the term 'homeless' is an appropriate label. It seems from the evidence of Mary Higgs that there was a population of women travellers who to some extent chose this way of life. It appears that there was also a residual group of prostitutes, beggars, and habitual vagrants who shifted between all these forms of accommodation, were sometimes reduced to sleeping out, and for whom this unsettled way of life had become the norm. These, I think, could be described as homeless, as while they may have become habituated to such an existence, the underlying cause of their destitution was chronic poverty.

Homelessness in the period is difficult to define and difficult to quantify. For all the reasons given, it appears that the official figures on women's homelessness were an underestimate of the true extent of the problem and represented the tip of an unmeasurable iceberg. Perhaps because of the greater invisibility of women's homelessness, little official attention was expended on it. However, women did respond to the problem and the Edwardian period saw the mobilisation of a large movement of middle and upper-class women aimed at helping their homeless sisters and demanding decent accommodation for working women.

NOTES

1. Lucy Luck 1848-1922, in John Burnett, (ed.), Useful toil: autobiographies of working people from the 1820s to the 1920s, Penguin Books, 1982, p.73

2. Report of the Departmental Committee on Vagrancy, 1906, Cd 2852 ciii., Vols.I-III

3. Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and relief of distress: 1906 Report; 1909 Cd 4499, Vol III, p.497

4. Ibid, Vol.II, Vagrancy, p.155, para 193

5. Census of England and Wales, 1861, LII Pt I 1863, p.7

6. Charles Booth, Life and labour of the people in London, Vol.I, Kelley Publishers, (New York), 1902

7. William Booth, In darkest England and the way out, 1890

8. See Helen Bosanquet, Social work in London 1869-1912, Harvester Press Ltd., 1973, first published 1914

9. See, for example, James Greenwood, 'A night in the workhouse', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 1866; Jack London, The people of the abyss, 1902; George Edwards, A vicar as vagrant, n.d.; cited in Lionel Rose, Rogues and vagabonds': a vagrant underworld in Britain 1815-1985, Routledge, 1988

10. See DCV, Vol.I, p.18, para.p.57

11. D Brandon, Women without homes, Christian Action Publications, n.d.

12. Mary Higgs, 'Vagrancy: its relation to the Industrial revolution', in Glimpses into the abyss, P S King & Sons, 1906, p.298

13. In 1861 94,470 females and 32,655 males received outdoor relief, and in 1895 57,886 females and 16,199 (PP (1895) Pauperism, England and Wales, LXXXIV 1169, p.viii)

14. See, e.g., CHAR 1994: 'a homeless person is defined as someone without secure and permanent accommodation. This includes women who sleep rough and those who live in temporary accommodation, such as hostels, women's refuges, bed and breakfast hotels, squats etc.', Mandana Hendessi, 4 in 10, Report on young women who become homeless as a result of sexual abuse, CHAR, 1992, p.xv; S.Watson and H.Austerberry, Housing and homelessness: a feminist perspective, 1987, define homelessness as 'sleeping rough, emergency direct-access hostel or refuge accommodation, restricted access hostel accommodation, and finally a conglomerate of non-institutionalised and hidden unsatisfactory forms of accommodation',(p.23)

15. The census of 1861 referred to 'the houseless class', (Census of England and Wales, 1861, op.cit.), and the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws talked of the 'houseless poor'. (RCPL, 1909, Report Vol III, p.521)

16. DCV, Vol.II, Evidence of Dr Armstrong, Medical Officer for Newcastle-upon-Tyne, para 3134

17. R Samuel, 'Comers and goers', in H J Dyos and M Wolff, (eds.) The Victorian city: images and realities, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973

18. See the accounts of W H Davies, The autobiography of a super tramp, 1908, and Mary Higgs, Glimpses into the abyss, P S King & Sons, 1906, for descriptions of people on the road.

19. R Samuel, op.cit., p.139

20. DCV, Vol.II, p.110, para.78

21. R Samuel, op.cit., p.152

22. RCPL, Vol III, p.505

23. R Samuel, op.cit., p.137

24. Ibid

25. Henry Mayhew, London labour and the London poor, Vol.III, 1861, pp.405-6, quoted in R Samuel, op.cit., p.139

26. DCV, Vol.I, p.22, para.74

27. See, for example, Department of Environment, Housing Research Report: outreach and resettlement work with people sleeping rough, 1995, which found that 'many rough sleepers lived unnoticed in disused buildings, barns or sheds'.

28. RCPL Report, Vol III, p.502

29. DCV, Vol.I, p.21, para.66

30. Ibid, para.67

31. Ibid, p.18, para.57

32. Local Government Board, 1882, p.281

33. Mary Higgs, op.cit., p.17

34. RCPL, Separate Report, p.498

35. Margaret A Tillard and the editor, 'Homeless men', in Charles Booth, (ed.), op.cit., Vol.I, p.221

36. DCV, Vol.I, p.32, para.114

37. See DCV, Vol.I, p.1, para.4, which commented that vagrants 'deliberately avoid work and depend for their existence on alms-giving and the casual wards; and for their benefit the industrious portion of the community is heavily taxed'.

38. RCPL, Separate Report, p.501

39. See DCV, Vol I, Ch.IV Casual wards, existing systems, pp.27-9

40. W H Davies, The autobiography of a super tramp, Jonathan Cape, 1929, p.215, (first published 1908)

41. Ibid, p.502

42. PP (1866) XXXV Reports made to the President of the Poor Law Board by Poor Law Inspectors, p.652

43. Ibid, p.677

44. Ibid, p.681

45. Ibid, p.681

46. Ibid, p.686

47. Ibid, p.725

48. PP (1872) Vagrants LI 519

49. DCV, Vol.1, para.57

50. Ibid, para.56

51. Ibid, p.246

52. Ibid, p.110

53. Dr Stallard, The female casual and her lodgings, 1866, quoted in L Rose, op.cit., p.123

54. See Mary Higgs, 'Five days and five nights as a tramp among tramps', in Glimpses into the abyss, P S King & Sons, 1906

55. DCV, Vol.II, p.62, para.1534

56. DCV, Vol.I, p.112, para 410

57. Ibid, p.111, para.405

58. R A Valpy, Common lodging houses, in C Booth, (ed.), op.cit., pp.336-7

59. Ibid, p.335

60. Ibid, p.336

61. Ibid, p.337

62. E Gauldie, Cruel habitations: a history of working class housing, 1780-1918, George Allen & Unwin, 1974, p.241

63. Quoted in D Brandon, op.cit., p.25

64. DCV, Vol.I, p.88, para. 326

65. Ibid, p.90, para.337

66. R A Valpy, op.cit., p.344

67. DCV, Vol.I, p.21, para.68

68. Ibid, paras.47-48

69. See R A Valpy, op.cit., p.340

70. DCV, Vol.I, p.88, para.324

71. DCV, Vol.III, Appendix IX, p.52

72. DCV, Vol.III, Appendix IX, p.53

73. Proceedings of the National Conference on Lodging House Accommodation for Women, held by the National Association of Women's Lodging Houses, 1911, p.37

74. Ibid, Appendix IX, Table IV

75. DCV, Vol.II, p.60, para.1504

76. DCV, Vol.III, Appendix IX, pp.55-56

77. DCV, Vol.II, p.60

78. A Fried and R Elman, (eds.), Charles Booth's London, Penguin Books, 1969, p.72

79. Ibid, p.83

80. Ibid, p.134

81. Thor Fedur, 'Sketches from Shady Places', 1879, cited in L Rose, op.cit., p.70

82. A Fried and R Elman, op.cit., p.11

83. W H Davies, op.cit., p.203

84. See Mary Higgs, A night in a common lodging house, in Glimpses into the abyss, 1906

85. Ibid

86. The Metropolitan Asylum for the Houseless Poor was founded in 1819, H Bosanquet, op.cit., p.302

87. RCPL, Vol III, p.521

88. DCV, Vol.I, p.80, para.330

89. W Booth, op.cit., p.25

90. RCPL, Vol III, p.522

91. Ibid

92. W Booth, op.cit., p.87

93. See Helen Bosanquet, op.cit., p.341, who said that the Salvation Army 'combined most of the methods against which the COS had been striving. No inquiries were made into cases, relief was given indiscriminately'.

94. Margaret Tillard and Charles Booth, op.cit., p.235

95. Report of the Metropolitan Poor Law Inspectors Advisory Committee on the Homeless Poor, 31.12 1913, 1914, Cd 7307 xliv, Appendix A

96. RCPL. Vol.III, p.523

97. Ibid, p.524

98. Report of the Metropolitan Poor Law Inspectors Advisory Committee on the Homeless Poor, 31.12 1913, 1914, Cd 7307 xliv

99. Ibid

100. This is underlined by the findings of an enquiry into the circumstances of people using casual wards carried out by the Salvation Army in 1905. Of the 206 men interviewed, only twenty-nine refused to give information, compared to 109 of the 206 women. (DCV, Vol.III, Appendix XXIV, p.137)

101. Mary Higgs, A night in a Salvation Army shelter, in Glimpses into the abyss, 1906, p.179

102. Mandana Hendessi, op.cit., pp.3-4

103. Report of the Metropolitan Poor Law Inspectors Advisory Committee on the Homeless Poor, 31.12 1913, 1914, Cd 7307 xliv

104. See W Booth, op.cit., p.165

105. DCV, Vol.1, para.381

106. W Booth, op.cit.,

107. DCV, Vol.III, Appendix XIX, p.113

108. PP (1884), Vagrants, LXVII 845

109. RCPL, Vol.III

110. L Rose, op.cit., p.122

111. RCPL, Vol. III, p.615

112. Mrs Cecil Chesterton, In darkest London, Stanley Paul & Co., 1926,p.115

113. L Rose, op.cit., p.107

114. G A Brine, 'The King of the Beggars', 1883 quoted in L Rose, op.cit., p.33

Chapter 8

MARY HIGGS AND THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR WOMEN'S LODGING-HOMES

> *From all ranks they come, floating down the river of death. What do you know of "The City of Dreadful Delight", of which George Sims speaks? I have slept in a woman's lodging house, managed in the interests of vice; I have heard the drunken steps of young girls staggering to bed after midnight. I have seen fresh victims, who have accidentally sought shelter, only to go under. This is the broken bridge.*
> (Mary Higgs, 1910[1])

The National Association for Women's Lodging Homes was established in 1909 in order to draw attention to the plight of single homeless women, and to campaign for the provision of a national system of municipal lodging houses for women. It was especially concerned with those in the lower reaches of society who were forced to resort to shelters, common lodging houses and the casual wards of workhouses. Such women were excluded from the hostels and lodging houses run by the more traditional women's organizations and it was this group that the National Association attempted to reach.

The Association was only in existence for six years, from 1909 to 1915, and in this chapter I intend to trace the short history of the organization, its aims and objectives and the extent to which it succeeded in those aims. Like the GFS, it was a women's organization, set up by middle and upper class-women in order to help their poorer sisters, and it shared many of its concerns. It differed in significant ways, however, from the women's societies begun in the Victorian period, and it is important to explore both the differences and the similarities in order to see how the women in this later organization perceived and responded to women's housing need.

SOURCES

There are no histories of the National Association and little has been written about it the context of either housing reform or of women's history.[2] Deborah Nord[3] has included Mary Higgs in her recent book about Victorian and Edwardian female social observers and researchers, but she does not discuss the work of the National Association. The Association published a number of reports, pamphlets and proceedings of its conferences and from these is it is possible to trace its history. There are no letters on record between the women involved and none have left memoirs which might give us some insight into how they worked together, so the 'process' element of the organization can only be surmised. Mary Higgs, the founder of the National Association, published a number of works about women's homelesness and accounts of her own investigations into casual wards, lodging houses and shelters. She wrote prolifically, passionately and forcefully on behalf of her cause, and it is her writings which form the main body of literature of the Association.

It is not possible to look at the history of the organization without also placing Mary Higgs, its founder, centre stage. I intend to focus upon her life, her extraordinary undercover journeys into the world of the destitute, and her analysis of homelessness in order to construct a picture of the concerns, and action, around the question of women's housing in the Edwardian period. There are no biographies of Mary Higgs, apart from a short memoir published privately by her daughter,[4] and like so many of the women in this study she is an unsung heroine. Famous in her life-time as 'Mother Mary, friend of down-and-outs',[5] she is almost totally forgotten today.

MARY HIGGS 1854-1937

Mary Higgs began her work on behalf of homeless women in the early 1900s. She was living in Oldham at this time, the wife of a Congregationalist minister and the mother of three children. She was actively involved in parish affairs, but far from being a conventional clergy wife she was also a scientist, a teacher, a journalist, and a noted Biblical scholar.[6] She was an advocate of the causes of temperance, pacifism, housing reform, of the Garden City movement and of mother and child welfare. She was also a suffragist and was active in women's organizations at a local, national and international level.[7]

Her father, William Kingsland, was a Congregationalist minister, and most of her childhood was spent in an industrial parish in Bradford where he had his ministry. He had progressive ideas about girls' education and according to her daughter, Mary and her two brothers 'were educated together by their father, so that there never arose the least question of any difference between a girl's mind and a boy's'.[8] William Kingsland's attitude towards women, and his encouragement of his daughter's education, were undoubtedly important factors in her life. In 1871, at the age of seventeen, she won a scholarship to Girton College. She was one of the first five Girton students, and the first woman to be awarded the Natural Sciences tripos. The scientific methods which Mary learned at Girton formed the basis of her future studies of social problems, such as vagrancy and unemployment, and ensured that her approach was grounded, not just in good intentions, but in a real endeavour to analyse and understand cause and effect in the working out of social processes.

On graduating Mary spent a further eighteen months at Girton as an assistant lecturer and then, at the age of twenty-one, returned to Bradford where she took up a post as a science and mathematics teacher. In 1879 she married Thomas Kilpin Higgs, like her

father a Congregationalist minister, and they moved to a parish in Hanley. The couple spent ten years at Hanley, where their three children were born, and this was a period in which Mary made friendships which were to be influential in her future work. General Booth of the Salvation Army and W T Stead, the journalist, were both visitors to the parsonage at Hanley. Booth and Stead had collaborated together in the writing of *In Darkest England and the Way Out*, and their stance on the problems of homelessness, and the solutions to it, found a sympathetic audience in Mary. Stead, as we have seen, was also a key actor in the social purity movement and had worked with Josephine Butler in the 1880s in the campaign for the Criminal Law Amendment Act. He was also the son of a Congregationalist minister, and himself deeply devout. He and Mary, together with a number of other scholars, worked together on a new translation of the New Testament which was published in 1898.[9] Stead was to be an important influence on Mary's life. Her daughter wrote that at the outset of her career her mother had 'found herself in full accord with him, both in his efforts for the cause of women and in his work for international friendship and understanding'.[10] Stead was also a founder of the Peace Crusade, and pacifism was another strand in Mary's life. Many of her friends were pacifists, and on the introduction of conscription in 1916, she herself took the step of joining the Society of Friends.

In 1891 the Higgs moved to a new ministry at Greenacres Parsonage in Oldham. Mary was very active in the life of the community in Oldham: she became secretary of the local branch of the COS, and together with her husband ran a school for young adults, helped set up the Oldham Guild of Help and became involved in the local branch of the YWCA. In 1901 she established the Beautiful Oldham Society, an organization dedicated to slum clearance, smoke abatement and the creation of parks and gardens - interests she shared with Octavia Hill and Henrietta Barnett. She was an active proponent of the Garden City Movement, writing regularly on the subject in the Oldham

press and in national journals, and in 1909 was instrumental in the creation of a garden suburb in Oldham.[11]

In the 1890s Mary put herself forward for election as a Poor Law Guardian and, although she was not successful at her first attempt, the campaign led to an invitation from Mrs Gertrude Emmott (later Lady Emmott), to join the Ladies' Committee of the Oldham Workhouse. Lady Emmott was the wife of one of Oldham's Liberal MPs and active in her own right in social welfare and women's organizations. Mary also met at this time Mrs Sarah Lees, later to become Dame Sarah Lees, and her daughter Marjory Lees, both of whom were to become life-long friends. Mary's daughter describes the Lees mother and daughter as 'those most generous friends.....whose devoted service to the town of Oldham she was to share throughout her life'.[12] Sarah Lees was an influential figure in Oldham society; the wife of a local magnate, she was the first woman to be elected to Oldham Town Council in 1907, and in 1910 she became the first woman mayor of Oldham, (only the second woman in the country to be appointed mayor after Dr Garret Anderson in Aldborough). She too was a member of the Congregationalist church and a committed pacificist, becoming a member of the General Council of the League of Nations in the post-war period. Her daughter Marjory was equally active in public life. She was a Poor Law Guardian alongside Mary, a fellow member of the Ladies' Workhouse Committee and Honorary Secretary of the Oldham Council of Social Welfare. Like her mother she was elected as a Liberal to Oldham Town Council on which she served for seventeen years. Mary and the Lees worked together in many local causes over the years and were leading lights in Oldham civic life.[13]

All three women were members of the National Union of Women Workers (NUWW) and of the constitutional side of the women's suffrage movement, and were prime

movers in the setting up of local branches of these organizations in Oldham. The NUWW (which became the National Council of Women in 1918) was started in 1895 by Miss Emily Janes to bring together local unions of women workers active in social affairs. It was inspired by Ellice Hopkins and her work with 'friendless' girls, but the NUWW encompassed workers from a wider field. It was a secular organization which aimed to include 'representatives of all political parties, all philanthropic and public work, all women's allegiances',[14] and described itself as a 'great co-ordinating body of women'.[15] (It was so all-encompassing that in 1908 it managed to have both the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies and the Anti-suffrage League affiliated to it, but the Antis resigned in 1910 when the NUWW passed a pro-suffrage resolution[16]). Among the members at a national level were Mrs Benson, the wife of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Mrs Henry Fawcett, Mrs Ramsay Macdonald, Mrs Beatrice Webb and Mrs Eva Maclaren, one of Octavia Hill's housing workers. The NUWW clearly criss-crossed the spectrum of women's interests and politics.

Sarah Lees was president of the Oldham branch of the NUWW, Mary Higgs, vice-president, Marjory Lees, secretary, and Lady Emmott, treasurer. Emily Janes, the founder and first Secretary of the NUWW, was a frequent visitor to Oldham and the links forged here were to be important to Mary when she went on to form the National Association for Women's Lodging Homes. All four women became members of the Oldham Society for Women's Suffrage when it was founded in 1910, and Marjory Lees was elected President. An Oldham branch of the Women's Social and Political Union was also set up in Oldham in 1910, but Mary and her friends were firmly on the constitutional side of the women's suffrage movement and did not join the more militant organization. Clearly Mary moved in a very close network of women activists in Oldham, and the links of friendship overlapped with social and political causes in a way which is reminiscent of women active in the first wave of the women's movement.

Both the Lees helped Mary with the small home for destitute women she started in 1900, Marjory attending the police courts to make contact with women prisoners and her mother supervising the accounts. Sarah Lees later put up the money for Bent House, a larger hostel for homeless women which Mary Higgs began in 1904.

The Lees and Lady Emmott were Liberals, but we do not know much about Mary Higgs' political allegiances. From her spectrum of interests one could speculate that she belonged to the progressive wing of the Liberal Party, but there are odd references which indicate that she may have had more socialist leanings. In the 1930s she wrote some articles on vagrancy for *Labour's Northern Voice*, the weekly paper of the Lancashire Divisional Independent Labour Party[17] and her daughter records that Mary spent some time living among Derbyshire miners during a coal strike.[18] She also mentions her collaboration in the work of the National Association with Mrs Cecil Chesterton, 'the wife of the famous socialist'.[19] However, since Mary Higgs never mentioned her politics in her writings we cannot be certain where her allegiances lay.

Mary's interest in the question of women's homelessness developed out of her work with the Ladies' Committee of the Oldham Workhouse. Her experiences there made her very aware of the vulnerable situation of women leaving the workhouse. 'When she visited the casual and maternity wards,' wrote her daughter, 'the dire need and danger of a destitute woman tramping the roads became startingly clear'.[20] In response she set up a small lodge for homeless women and there she says she was able to study their lives at first hand. Her interest became a serious one and she set about a study of the Poor Law and its dealings with vagrancy, visited a number of remedial agencies both in Britain and abroad and interrogated a number of social experts.[21] Finally, in order to experience the life of a homeless woman at first hand, she took the bold step of going out on the road herself in the guise of a female tramp. In the summer of

1903, together with an anonymous companion, she undertook a five day tour of towns in West Yorkshire, staying in common lodging houses, casual wards and shelters.

She was not the first person to undertake an undercover investigation into homelessness. A number of social investigators and journalists in the late nineteenth century disguised themselves as tramps in order to write exposees of conditions in the casual wards and night shelters.[22] Indeed it is a tradition which was carried on famously by George Orwell in the 1930s,[23] and is still a common device of investigative journalists today. Nor was she the first woman to do this. As we have seen, Ellen Stanyard in the 1860s stayed in casual wards in London in the guise of a homeless woman. However, it was an unconventional step to take for a clergy wife and mother, and a woman who, at this point, was in her fiftieth year. While social work among the poor might have been a natural extension of her parish duties, the journey she was about to undertake went far beyond this, and, it appears, she faced some hostility from local parishioners. J S Whitehead, one of Mary's Oldham friends, wrote on her death in 1937:

> Mary Higgs had to meet much opposition from persons who were not worthy to unlace her shoes. These persons thought that her place, as the wife of a respectable minister, was not in tramping up and down the country, sleeping in workhouses, and generally mixing with "publicans and sinners" in the highways and byways of life, but by the side of her husband in his ministry work, forgetting (or was it ignoring?) that this special work of hers was her own conception of her Christian duty.[24]

Her daughter said that it was a step which was to change Mary's life.

It is worth setting out Mary Higgs' rationale for this venture as, unlike previous journeys into 'darkest England', it was posed in terms of a scientific experiment. 'Exploration', she said, 'was the method of science',[25] and she 'resolved to make a first hand

exploration, by that method of personal experiment, which is the nearest road to accurate knowledge, of the conditions under which destitute women were placed who sought the shelter of the common lodging house or the workhouse'.[26] Following her empirical work, it seemed, she said, 'a necessary corollary to the acquisition of wide collection of facts to form some uniting theory capable of correlating them'.[27]

She outlined her grand theory in a preface to her prize-winning *Essay on Vagrancy* of 1905.[28] She described this as 'a literary investigation into the deterioration of human personality, viewed from psychological, medical and religious points of view'.[29] Her theory, she said, accorded with Plato's diagnosis of the degeneration of a State or an individual, with Meyer's *Disintegration of Personality* and with James' *Phenomena of Religious Experience*, and it is concerned with the supposed links between the evolution of the race and that of the individual. In summary, Mary Higgs posited that the psychology of the individual retraces the path of the psychology of the race, which on the whole is upwards, from the nomadic state of life to civilisation. Certain individuals - vagrants - remain stranded on lower levels of evolution and retrace downwards the path of the race. These can only be reclaimed by 'wise social legislation'. She concluded:

> Society has now arrived at a point of development when these facts must be recognised, and the whole question of the organization of humanity put on a scientific basis. It will then be possible to reduce the sciences of sociology and psychology to scientific order, and our national treatment of such questions as vagrancy will be no longer purely empirical.[30]

There are a number of comments to be made about Mary Higgs' theory and methods. This 'scientific' enquiry into vagrancy was part of wider contemporary concerns about the future of the human race and reflects the social Darwinism of the time. It also reflects the 'recapitulation theory' of childhood development that was prevalent at the time, that is, 'the idea that the child in its development recapitulates or repeats the

stages of development of the human race'.[31] By the end of the nineteenth century, according to Hugh Cunningham, 'in child study circles the theory of recapitulation was an unchallenged axiom'.[32] Mary Higgs was very much part of these circles[33] and she applied this key theory to the phenomenon of vagrancy.

Her ideas seem an amalgam of contemporary ideas about eugenics and evolution, and despite her claims to rigorous scientific method, her theory is neither refutable nor provable. However, she reached it by systematic investigation into homelessness and attempted an explanation which rested on the working out of historical forces rather than on individual failure. This is significant as it determined her to work on a national scale, rather than a local one and to appeal to statutory intervention rather than voluntary effort. Despite her dispassionate 'scientific' approach to the question of homelessness, Mary Higgs wrote in the most emotive, and moralistic, terms about the plight of homeless women and her account of her journey gives a very vivid picture of their lives.

FIVE DAYS AND FIVE NIGHTS AS A TRAMP AMONG TRAMPS

Mary and her companion set off on their journey on a Monday with two shillings and sixpence in their pockets, suitably disguised:

> We dressed very shabbily, but were respectable and clean. We wore shawls and carried hats, which we used if desirable, according to whether we had sunshine or rain, or wished to look more or less respectable. We carried soap, a towel, a change of stockings, and a few other small articles, wrapped in an old shawl. My boots were in holes, and my companion wore a grey tweed well-worn suit. My hat was a certificate for any tramp ward, and my shawl was ragged, though clean. We had one umbrella between us.[34]

We do not know much about Mary's companion, and she remained anonymous throughout the account. Mary Higgs described her as a working woman and it is

possible that she was the matron of the Oldham lodge for homeless women. They took a train to an unnamed town some distance from Oldham and arriving in the evening set out to seek lodgings. The first night they stayed in a large municipal lodging house which catered for men, women and couples. They were given a bed in a separate cubicle and although the bedding was dirty, and there were no private washing facilities, the house was 'fairly comfortable' compared with their subsequent experiences. The second night was spent in a common lodging house which was far inferior. It was dirty, men, women and children all shared the same common kitchen and the conversation was 'unspeakably foul'.[35] There was only one wc for forty people, which was filthy, and only one sink for washing. They were put in a cubicle without a door, next to a compartment occupied by a man, and were kept awake by the sounds of people scratching. 'I can hardly describe', she said, 'the feeling of personal contamination caused by even one night in such surroundings'.[36]

The next day, exhausted by two nights of broken sleep, they decided not to move on, but to stay in the same town and go into the workhouse that night. To their dismay, they found that a male inmate had been left in charge of the admission lodge who made sexual advances to them. 'Just the right age for a bit of funning', he said to Mary, 'come down to me later in the evening'.[37] On being repulsed by her, he then tried to kiss her friend. 'If our pilgrimage has had no other result', she said, 'I shall be glad to be able to expose the positive wrong of allowing a male pauper to admit female tramps.'[38] They were put to bed, 'like babies' at half past six, with fithy night-gowns to wear, and were further distressed to discover that a male porter had the key to their room.

The next day they walked to another workhouse, and again found a lone male pauper in the lodge who spoke disrespectfully to them. Conditions here were much the same

as in the previous casual ward, dirty and uncomfortable beds to sleep in and inedible gruel to eat. Mary commented that by this stage both their clothes and they themselves were getting very dirty. 'In the common lodging house', she commented, 'you can wash your clothes but not yourself; in the workhouse tramp ward you can wash yourself but not your clothes!'[39] She also made the practical point that as the washing facilities provided in lodging houses and casual wards were so inadequate, women could not keep themselves or their clothes clean and consequently could not obtain respectable work. A grimy appearance was not so much of a disadvantage to men seeking manual labour, but 'a woman must "look tidy" or no one will employ her'.[40]

By their fifth and last night the women had run out of money and only had a penny left. Mary pawned her shawl for two shillings and sixpence and they stayed in a women's shelter which provided beds at fourpence each. This offered much the best provision they had found. There were good washing facilities, free baths, even a hall with a piano, and most importantly, it was women-only and had a woman supervisor, ' a pleasant elderly woman' who sat in the kitchen and 'prevented foul talk and brawls'.[41] 'It was a great relief to find ourselves once more in a decent place, and with women only.....just the sort of provision for migratory women', Mary said, 'which should exist in *every* town'.[42]

Mary discovered, as she had suspected, that lodging houses were dirty and overcrowded, and positively encouraged immorality, and that casual wards operated too harsh and punitive a regime for any but the most desperate women to choose to stay in them. 'The tramp ward is a mockery, a robbery and insult to womanhood', she said, 'the common lodging house is a snare and a trap'.[43] Charitable shelters, while offering the best accommodation, were too few and far between. The fact that she had

experienced these conditions at first hand herself gave extra force to her findings and she describes very vividly the horrors of sleeping in filthy bug-ridden bedding, of having to share bedrooms with strangers, the cold, discomfort and degradation of the casual ward and the dangers of the life of a destitute woman. Her overall reaction was one of disgust and repugnance at the physical conditions she found. 'The using of others' dirty nightgowns was the most revolting feature in our tramp', she said.[44] Among the factors forcibly brought home to her was the exhaustion caused as a result of daily tramping on top of inadeqate food and rest, and exacerbated by the manual tasks imposed in the casual ward. Mary and her companion were well-nourished and healthy, yet by the end of these five days they were both sick and tired. The sexual vulnerability of women on the road was also a shock to her. She was repeatedly spoken to by men:

> I had never realised before that a lady's dress or even that of a respectable working woman, was a protection. The bold free look of a man at a destitute woman must be felt to be realised. A destitute woman told me that if you tramped, "You had to take up with a fellow".[45]

Mary might have been aware at a theoretical level of the hardships which women faced on the roads before she undertook this journey, but experiencing them first hand herself was a different proposition. She is the first woman in this study to deliberately identify with homeless women to this extent, and while her journey might have been an artificial experiment, her exposure of herself to dirt, disease, hunger and discomfort, shows a commitment to their cause which went further than most were prepared to risk. It also gave her the authority of experience from which to campaign for improvements. Mary was well aware of this and she wrote that 'little short of a revolution may be made in preconceived opinion by actual experience'.[46]

Mary wrote up the story of her journey in a pamphlet entitled *Five Days and Nights as a Tramp among Tramps*.[47] It was published by the Women Guardians and Local

Government Association and had a wide circulation. Mary's daughter wrote that the result of her mother's journey, and the attendant publicity, was 'a great expansion of her sphere of work just at the time when her children were old enough for her to take engagements outside Oldham, using tongue and pen in the cause of reform'.[48] She was clearly gaining a reputation as an expert on the subject of vagrancy and in 1904, as we have seen, she was called as a witness, the only female witness, before the Departmental Committee on Vagrancy. Her recommendations that the casual wards should be closed to women and children and that they should be received into the workhouse proper were endorsed by the Committee in its final report, but were not carried through into legislation.

Mary Higgs carried out a number of other incognito expeditions and between 1903 and 1906 undertook five further investigations of lodging houses, shelters and casual wards in the North and in London. She wrote about her expeditions in the press and in pamphlets and in 1906 brought out a collection of her writings on homelessness entitled *Glimpses into the Abyss.*[49] A number of themes emerge from her writings: her analysis of the structural causes which forced women into homelessness, their pitiful plight once reduced to this way of life, the pressure upon them to resort to prostitution in order to survive, and above all the inadequate provision which was made for them. At the forefront of her argument was the point that homelessness was caused by structural factors - unemployment, poverty and housing scarcity. 'Inevitably the class that can pay least, or cannot pay at all, will be crowded out, if housing accommodation is scanty', she said, 'and this will especially be the case with the migratory "out of work" who has no particular claim of anyone'.[50] She also pointed out that the preponderance of single women in the population, added to by widowhood and desertion, left a large vulnerable group of women, 'who would easily fall prey to the wrong conditions'.[51] 'If a woman "cannot get work"', she said, 'where is she to go?

What is she to do?'[52] She took issue with the view expressed by the DCV that women's homelessness was comparatively unimportant and made the point that it was disguised by prostitution:

> The life of the street is the feminine side of the unemployment problem. Make up your mind, whenever the unemployment problem grows acute, that the feminine side is the pushing of so many unprotected women over the edge into vice. This fact accounts for the comparative smallness of the number of women in common lodging houses.[53]

Uncompromisingly, she said 'the harlot is the *female tramp*, driven by hard social conditions to the primitive freedom of sexual relationship'.[54]

In her willingness to give a name to prostitution rather than vaguely alluding to it, Mary was more direct than the GFS. However, she too shared their concerns about the unprotected state of young single women and of the dangers which existed for young single women in the cities. Her strongest propaganda weapons were based on the claim that young women were being forced by the lack of suitable accommodation into a life of vice from which there was little chance of escape. She alluded more than once to the existence of an organized trade in young women, 'a spider's web',[55] which enmeshed young friendless girls into prostitution. Unlike the GFS, however, her concern spread wider than young women and she was particularly moved by the plight of the older women she met in her travels, women who had been shaken out of their homes by bereavements or the loss of a job, and who drifted, 'unable to recover a stable position if once their clothing had become dirty or shabby'.[56]

She also shared some of the traditional views of the GFS about the sanctity of home and family life and expressed them very dramatically. 'I ask you', she wrote, 'whether the present vagrancy problem is not to a large extent the disintegration of the home; and whether therefore we are not face to face with the root problem on which the very

existence of civilisation depends, since by the preservation or extinction of the home a nation stands or falls?'[57] Mixed with these views were some eugenically-orientated arguments. She talked of 'the increase and propagation of an underfed, ill-bred, uneducated offspring which was 'a menace to civilisation'.[58] This seems very much at odds with her sympathy with the poor and destitute, and reflects contemporary social debate rather than the evidence uncovered by her own investigations into people's circumstances.

There are paradoxes evident in Mary's analysis of social problems, and the appropriate responses to them. Nevertheless, she recognised that homelessness was the inevitable result of women's disadvantaged economic position and that the need could not be met by voluntary effort alone. 'Do we not need a national provision for migration and temporary destitution among women?'[59] she asked. Significantly, she said that 'the national recognition of the right of the individual to employment and subsistence seems to me to be the remedy for the harlot and the tramp'.[60] This is a considerable advance on the duty-laiden vocabulary of Octavia Hill and the GFS, and Mary Higgs is the first women I have been able to identify who talked in terms of the *rights* of women in relation to housing.

She too called upon the duty of more fortunate women to come forward and help their poorer sisters, saying 'surely, it belongs to womanhood to befriend womanhood'.[61] She talked of 'universal sisterhood',[62] but she went further than the ladies of the GFS in showing real anger, rather than outrage, at male exploitation of women. She wrote that 'those intimately acquainted with the white slave traffic can bear witness to the fact that it does not proceed from the struggle of women for self-support, so much as from the struggle of men to make women support them'.[63]

The agitation surrounding the suffragette movement had put the question of women's rights firmly on the national agenda, and Mary Higgs clearly had strong feminist views. She pointed out that women often constituted the majority of the population of a city and had 'a right to settle problems affecting their own sex'.[64] In an essay written in 1909 she set out her thoughts on the disadvantages of marriage and motherhood for women:

> Inside the home woman may have been co-partner, but too frequently she was slave. Even in the case of the married woman, grave as is the need that she should suckle her own babes and be an efficient mother, yet we fear lest if legislative restriction is applied and she is debarred from work, the battle for women's freedom will be but half won. For it would be a grave evil if only the single woman were free, if to marry meant a return to primitive slave status, to the great unpaid industry, the "sweated labour" of motherhood, and the compulsory rearing of unwanted babes.[65]

This is a fairly strong rejection of the idea that woman's supreme role was that of wife and mother, and shows a recognition of the gap which existed between the ideology of home and the reality of it for many women.

What stands out in Mary's writings is her recognition of the huge importance in people's lives that a safe place to live played, her insistence that social and economic forces played a part in homelessness, and her view that only a statutory response could meet the need. 'The 'way-out', she said in a reference to William Booth's *In Darkest England and the Way-out*, 'is to provide in every town, under charge of the municipality, well-regulated, sanitary and sufficient accommodation. Especially for women, municipal lodging houses are a necessity'.[66]

In the midst of all this activity a great change occurred in Mary's private life. In 1907 her husband Thomas died of pneumonia. She moved, together with her unmarried daughter and son, into a cottage next door to Bent House, a second lodging house for

women in Oldham which she and the Lees had set up in 1904. When her son married in 1912 she moved into rooms in Bent House itself, which remained her Oldham home for the rest of her life. This physical proximity meant a constant involvement in the lives of homeless women, and unlike most workers with the poor and destitute, there was little distance for Mary between her own home-life and the women with whom she worked.

We do not know the personal effect that the death of her husband had on Mary, nor how she was left financially. There is no record of her undertaking any paid work and her voluntary activities must have been almost full-time, so presumably either Thomas left her well provided for, or she had private means, possibly a Church pension, or perhaps her friends supported her. Certainly there was no withdrawal from public life, nor diminution in her activities, but, on the contrary, Mary continued to expand her sphere of involvement. In 1909 she carried out an extensive civic survey of Oldham, described as being 'in the track of Booth and Rowntree.[67] In 1912 she set up a School for Mothers at Bent House and wrote a series of articles advocating family allowances. Bent House became not only a women's hostel, but also a centre for other social and educational activities in which Mary Higgs played a central role. An article written in the *Oldham Chronicle* in 1924 to mark her 70th birthday, said of Bent House:

> The Council of Social Welfare operates from there....other interests are a child welfare section, a school for mothers....a girls' club, a mothers' meeting, a reading circle, a poetry society, and a branch of the Workers' Educational Association. These numerous activities are largely due to the instigation of Mrs Higgs.[68]

Clearly Mary Higgs' interests were wide-ranging and it is significant that welfare, cultural and educational activities, while aimed at different groups, were all carried out under the same roof as the hostel for homeless women. Like Octavia Hill and the

ladies of the GFS, Mary Higgs took a holistic view of people's lives and considered that there was more to social work than the material amelioration of poverty. She was also involved with the British Institute for Social Service and it was under the auspices of this organization that she was to form the National Association of Lodging Houses for Women.

The British Institute was set up in 1904 as an umbrella body to co-ordinate the activities of the very many disparate bodies working in the field of social work. It described itself as 'a society's society' and aimed to act as a resource to other bodies. To this end it ran a library and a volunteer bureau, facilitated lecture series and conferences and also lent its premises to other agencies for their meetings and conferences. It was a secular organization and was not affiliated to any political party. Its Council included leading figures in social reform such as Canon Barnett, Joseph Rowntree, Sidney Webb and Mrs Humphrey Ward, and its Parliamentary committee, set up in 1913, had Balfour and Asquith as vice-presidents and Ramsay Macdonald as a member.[69] Among the movements regularly reported in *Progess*, the Institute's monthly journal, were the Garden City movement, housing reform, university settlements, child education, health, Poor Law reform, socialism, women's and children's affairs, and overseas developments. The Institute was largely the creation of a personal friend of Mary Higgs, the Rev J B Paton. He was a leading figure in the Congregationalist Church, and an educational and social reformer, and they had worked closely together in setting up the COPEC movement, (Christian Politics, Economics and Citizenship). The editor of *Progress*, the Rev Alfred Holden Byles, was also a Congregationalist minister.

Mary Higgs was a key member of the Institute and actively involved in many of the movements which it embraced. She was elected as a subscribing member in 1907 and

became a member of its General Council in 1913. She contributed an article to the first edition of *Progress* in 1906 on the work of the Beautiful Oldham Society and items from her were to appear regularly over the years. Her activities were reported on in the Institute's journal and her various publications reviewed in glowing terms. In October 1906 a review of her book *Glimpses into the Abyss* appeared in *Progress* which described her as 'a finely cultured woman....willing to suffer that she might save her submerged sisters.'[70] Questions of housing and homelessness were prominent among the Institute's concerns and in 1909 it called together a conference at the request of Mrs Higgs to consider 'the urgency of the need for providing more and better accommodation for women than is afforded by common lodging houses and casual wards'.[71] Mary Higgs was among the speakers at the meeting and its outcome was the organization of the National Association for Women's Lodging-homes.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LODGING HOUSES FOR WOMEN

The four objectives of the Association were declared to be:

1) To link together all organizations and individuals interested in opening or maintaining lodging-homes, lodging-houses, or shelters for women and girls in the United Kingdom.

2) To collect and disseminate information as to existing accommodation and the need for more, by publications, conferences, deputations to public authorities, etc.

3) To promote legislation for the better regulation of common lodging houses in so far as they effect women.

4) To encourage the formation of local committees affiliated with the parent Association.[72]

The Association quickly constituted itself with a General Council and Northern and Southern Committees and in 1910 elected the Duchess of Marlborough, also a member of the British Institute, as President. Twenty two organizations were represented on the Council, including the NUWW, represented by its Secretary, Miss Emily Janes; the Salvation Army, represented by Mrs Bramwell Booth, and the Women's Industrial Council, represented by Mrs Emmott - all of whom were friends of

Mary Higgs. Other major organizations included the Church Army, the National Free Church Council, the YWCA and the Society of Friends. Among the individuals on the Council were Elizabeth Robins, the well-known American actress and prominent suffragette.[73] Mary Higgs became Secretary of the Northern Committee, and Edward Hayward, another member of the British Institute, became the honorary organizing secretary of the Association. Edward Hayward was also the British Institute's Honorary Adviser on Housing and he and Mary were both members of the Froebel Society, a body concerned with child education and psychology. The Association was predominantly, but not exclusively, a female organization and among the forty people who made up its first Council, twelve were men, mostly clergymen, including the Bishop of Liverpool. Mary Higgs showed none of the lack of confidence in matters of procedure displayed by the ladies of the GFS in the 1870s and, unlike the GFS, the National Association did not incorporate men to deal with the financial aspects of the organization, but had a woman, Mrs Hylton Dale, as its treasurer.

In 1910 Mary Higgs and Edward Hayward co-authored a book which set out the case of the National Association, *Where Shall She Live? The Homelessness of the Woman Worker.*[74] The first half of the book was written by Edward Hayward and provided a systematic analysis of the major women's occupations and the types of housing associated with them, showing how low wages and the living-in system left women vulnerable to homelessness. The second half of the book was written by Mary and dealt with the consequences of women's precarious economic situation, in particular their vulnerability to prostitution. She had a most emotive and persuasive pen, and painted a very vivid picture of the horrors of these women's lives

The National Association held a second conference in 1910 at which two resolutions were passed - to hold a national conference in the Spring of 1911, and to send a

deputation to the LCC drawing attention to the pressing need in London for lodging house accommodation for women. The deputation was received by the Housing Committee of the LCC on 15 February 1911. It met with 'a cordial reception' and the Housing Committee subsequently appointed a sub-committee 'to inquire into the whole question of the provision by the municipality of suitable accommodation for women in London'.[75] This seemed promising, but in fact the LCC never went further than this and no women's hostels were ever opened by the LCC.

The Corporation of London was sympathetic to the aims of the National Association and the 1911 conference was held in the Guildhall under the joint presidency of the Duchess of Marlborough and the Lord Mayor of London. Ten societies co-operated with the Association in organizing the conference including the Mansion House Council of Health and Housing, the Federation of Working Girls Clubs, the National Council of Public Morals, the National Union of Women Workers, the National Vigilance Association, the Travellers' Aid Society, the Women's Industrial Council and the YWCA. Princess Christian sent a representative to the conference and a letter was read out from Queen Mary expressing her sympathy with its aims. The national status of the groups involved shows both the interest which was being taken in the question of women's housing and the high profile which the Association had been able to achieve in the short period it had been in existence.

The Conference took place on 17 May 1911 and was a very well attended event. Some five hundred delegates came from all over the country and over fifty eight organizations were represented, including the GFS, (represented by Miss Hotchkiss, the head of their Lodgings Department), the Charity Organization Society, the Fabian Women's Society and the Women's Labour League. Nine London boroughs were also represented. This was a major event and the spread of organizations represented

shows the degree of interest which was being taken in the question of women's housing. In convening the conference, the National Association had hit upon a time when the question of homelessness was high on the national agenda. The Departmental Committee on Vagrancy had reported in 1906, the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws, which reported in 1909, had spent much of its time considering the problems of destitution and vagrancy and the inefficacy of the existing system to deal with them, and the Salvation Army and the Church Army were pioneering new methods of providing rehabilitative accommodation. Women were also organizing around the issue of housing. In January 1911 the south-west conference of the Women's Labour League heard a talk on the need for municipal lodging-houses for working women, and the next month the Cardiff branch requested its local authority to provide such a lodging house.[76]

Twelve papers were read at the conference and three resolutions were passed. These called for municipal authorities to tighten up their inspection of common lodging houses and for women's lodging houses to be inspected by women; for respectable, cheap, women's lodging houses to be provided by municipal authorities, philanthropic societies and private building enterprise, and for the National Association to draw up schemes which the LCC and the Corporation of the City of London might put into effect.[77]

At the time the National Association was formed in 1909 only Glasgow had a municipal lodging house for women. Built in 1878, it had 248 beds at three pence and four pence a night. According to Mary Higgs, it was well-run and well-used and she cited it as an example of how a lodging house for women could be successfully run without

making a financial loss. In 1910, Ashton House, another municipal lodging house for women opened in Manchester, which had 220 beds at 4d, 5d and 6d. This was named in honour of Margaret Ashton, a Manchester councillor, who was the main force behind it. She was a member of the National Association and gave a paper on the running of the hostel at the 1911 conference. The recent precedent of the Manchester lodge gave some hope that other towns might follow its example and the National Association was very active in campaigning for this end. A great deal of anger was expressed that men were so well catered for while women were not. At the 1911 conference, Mrs C Morrison, a delegate from Liverpool, spoke of the ample provision made for men in the city, of the three women's deputations made to the city council asking for a lodging house for women and how these had all been turned down on the grounds of cost. She spoke angrily of the thousands of pounds the city spent on parks, churchyards, baths and other civic possessions. 'Perhaps', she said, 'when we get a few more City Mothers in the Council, something worthy of the city may be done to help in the uplifting of the homeless and the inarticulate section of the womanhood in the busy cities!'[78]

Given that legislation had been passed allowing local authorities to build houses and flats for rent for the working classes, it is interesting that the National Association never campaigned for municipalities to provide such housing for women, but concentrated all its efforts on communal lodging houses. Alderman W Thompson, chairman of the National Housing and Town Planning Council, spoke at the 1911 conference on the subject of the legislation on municipal housing for women.[79] He pointed out that the Housing of the Working Classes Act of 1890 contained powers for the municipal housing of women, and that if Local Authorities did not voluntarily provide housing accomodation for women, they could be called upon by any four inhabitant householders of the District to provide lodging-houses, flats, or cottages for women of

the working classes. The Rural District Council of Chertsey, he added, had just been ordered by the Local Government Board to prepare such a scheme for the building of six cottages for women. The National Association did not follow this route, possibly because such housing would have been too expensive for the poorly paid women for whom it was campaigning. However, Mary Higgs also strongly disapproved of the idea of young working-class women living independently. Furnished rooms, she said, were generally let to the poorest and often 'lowest class of persons'.[80]

> Women are forced to club [ie share] or take a furnished room or to pair with men. But this gravely accentuates immorality as such women are beyond control. Even a brothel can be dealt with, but a couple of women may live immorally and the police cannot deal with them'.[81]

The living arrangements of mill and factory girls show that for women themselves the preference was often for shared independent accommodation, but for Mary Higgs, along with other middle-class commentators, the overwhelming belief was that young unattached women needed supervision.

Following the 1911 conference, the National Association concentrated on collecting information for a national directory of women's hostels and on lobbying and campaigning activities. In 1912 Mary Higgs produced a pamphlet, *How to start a women's lodging house*,[82] which laid down guidelines on how to lobby local authorities to make provision. The press should be involved, she said, and personal investigation made into the present conditions of women's lodging houses in the area. National Association literature should be distributed, the Medical Officer of Health, the Chief Constable and lady sanitary inspectors contacted, and councillors and the Mayor approached personally. Once sufficient local interest had been aroused a deputation should be sent to the council, armed with facts as to local need and the situation with regard to the provision of women's municipal lodging houses nationally. Examples were provided in the pamphlet of the existing municipal lodging houses in Manchester

and Glasgow, together with figures demonstrating their financial viability. After a deputation had laid the matter before the council, a public meeting should be organised in the Town Hall, preferably under the chairmanship of the Mayor. If all this failed, she said, 'there is nothing for it but persistent agitation'.[83] The question of better regulation of the existing lodging houses could be brought before the public and special bye-laws obtained for the regulation of lodging houses and furnished rooms. She also suggested that the question could be raised in connection with municipal elections and made a test question for candidates, pointing out that lady councillors might be particularly sympathetic.

These detailed guidelines on how to run an effective local campaign show a quite sophisticated awareness of the workings of local government. Mary Higgs never sat as a councillor herself but her close friendship with Sarah Lees, a councillor since 1907, and her involvement with local affairs in Oldham, must have given her an insight into the processes of municipal government and how to manipulate them. Interestingly, although she suggested 'persistent agitation' in order to further the campaign, she did not advocate any direct action, such as demonstrations or marches or the with-holding of rates, but placed her campaigning firmly within the framework of persuasion through the processes of local democracy. Given that this pamphlet was written in 1912, at the height of the militant suffragette campaign, one might have supposed that some more direct action would suggest itself. However, Mary Higgs, as a member of the constitutional wing of the women's suffrage movement rather than the militant WSPU, possibly disapproved of the tactics which they employed.

The main purpose of the Association was a campaigning and co-ordinating one, but a number of hostels were opened under its auspices. In 1913 the Association opened Mary Curzon House in central London, described as 'a Model Lodging House'.[84] This

had accommodation for fifty-four residents and was funded by the Duchess of Marlborough. New hostels were also started at Tunbridge Wells and Brighton, following joint meetings held by the National Association and the local branches of the NUWW.[85] In its role as a co-ordinating body, the Association drew together information on new developments and its Report for 1913 listed sixteen new hostels starting. One of these, at Leeds, was described as being 'the first to take the honoured name of 'Stead Hostel'.[86] Presumably this was named after W T Stead, Mary's old friend, who had gone down with the Titanic in 1912.

The National Association encouraged existing women's lodges to affiliate to it and by 1915 it had built up a network of forty-six affiliated women's lodges, including those run by the large providers, the GFS and the YWCA. Its annual reports contained brief reports from all these hostels, and news on developments in the field. It was much more successful in the voluntary sector than the statutory one, and indeed it made very little headway in persuading local authorities to open hostels for women. In 1913 it was reported that 'after repeated efforts on the part of the National Association, the Bristol Municipality had resolved to equip a Women's Municipal Lodging House', but that 'Sheffield, Hull and Liverpool have not yet yielded to the desires of repeated deputations'.[87]

The reluctance of the local authorities to provide lodging houses for women appeared to be based on fears that they would be under-used, and hence financially unviable, and also that they might attract prostitutes. Much of the Association's literature was aimed at refuting these fears, giving examples of how lodging houses could be run efficiently and well, but despite sympathetic responses from some municipalities, few were prepared to take the risk. It appears that there was also more general opposition to the idea of providing accommodation for women outside the family home and the

Duchess of Marlborough in her address to the 1911 conference attempted to allay these fears. She said that 'those who speak so eloquently against what they term the breaking up of the home', perhaps had, 'not always seen the home they profess the provision of decent lodgings for girls would destroy'.[88]

Where the Association was particularly successful was in co-ordinating the efforts of the many individual groups working in the field of women's housing and in disseminating information. In 1913 it published a directory of women's lodging houses[89] which had 420 entries covering the whole of the United Kingdom. Hostels were classified according to the type of woman for whom the accommodation was intended and the directory gave details as to the size of the hostel, charges, opening hours and age limits. This was a major piece of work and provides a comprehensive picture of the extent of women's voluntary efforts in housing in the Edwardian period.

The National Association itself was a fairly small body. In 1915 it had a total membership of 161 people, consisting of fifty seven members of the General Council, fifty one members of the Northern Committee, thirty-seven members of the Southern Committee and a further sixteen correspondents for the South of England. There are no accounts of what the work of the Northern and Southern Committees consisted, but a considerable number of the members of these committees are listed as representing affiliated hostels so presumably they provided local networks and forums which fed into the General Council. A further 101 people made subscriptions or donations to the Assocation in 1915, making a total of 362 people connected with the Association in some way in this year. Overall, there were 134 women represented on the Council and Committees and twenty-seven men, and of those who made subscriptions, ninety were women and eleven men, so clearly it was an organization which made greatest appeal to women. Single women appeared to predominate in the membership; in 1915 there

were sixty-two 'Misses' and forty-five 'Mrs', and seventeen titled ladies, whose marital status is not known.

It is clear from the membership lists that a great deal of 'networking' went on, both formal and informal. The close involvement of the Association with the British Institute for Social Service and the NUWW gave it access to large national networks. The Institute lent its premises for meetings, acted as the national headquarters of the Association and publicised its activities in its journal, and many of the members of the National Association were also members of the Institute. The NUWW also provided a national network of women which helped to further the work of the National Association. It promoted its meetings and at least one women's hostel, at Hull, was opened under its auspices.[90] In 1913 the National Association assisted the legislative committee of the NUWW in drawing up model bye-laws for furnished rooms.[91] There was also a crossover of members between the National Association, the British Institute and the NUWW. A number of members, including Mary Higgs, Emily Janes, Sarah and Marjory Lees and Lady Emmott were members of all three organizations. These women were all personal friends and it is clear that the Association worked very much through friendship networks.

The Association also succeeded in attracting a prestigious membership to its General Council. By 1915 it had expanded to fifty-seven members, including nine Ladies and two marchionesses, two bishops and one MP, Lord Henry Cavendish-Bentinck. Its president, the Duchess of Marlborough, may not have been as grand as the Queen, but she was a glamorous figure in Edwardian society, and was very well connected. She was also more than a figure-head. She wrote on behalf of the Association, personally funded the Mary Curzon hostel, and was actively involved in other women's charities.[92] Like the GFS, the Association also had royal connections. Queen Mary,

Queen Alexandria and other members of the royal family took an interest in the work of the Association, visiting lodging houses and receiving various of its publications.[93]

A powerful and effective national organization had been put in place in a comparatively short period of time and if war had not broken out in 1914, the Association might well have succeeded in its aims of having the housing needs of women recognised at a statutory level. War meant that the existing women's hostels were put to different uses. The Association reported in 1914 that no hostel had gone under because of the War, but plans for the Bristol hostel had been shelved, several were being used in connection with the Queen Mary Scheme for the Employment of Women and that 'over and over again soldiers and sailors wives necessarily obliged to travel have found them a safe refuge'.[94] Many were taken over by the Government as hostels for munitions workers and Mary Higgs' daughter writes that as they passed into public management 'her work as secretary was finished and she concentrated on local needs'.[95] The last report of the National Association appeared in 1915.

POSTSCRIPT

After the War the work of the Association appears to have been taken over by the National Council of Women (previously the NUWW). It was reported in *Progress* in 1923 that the NCW had recently published a list of hostels in London and Provinces for women in professions and industry. This contained a foreword by Mrs Mary Higgs in which she pointed out that:

> The need for accommodation for women and girls is still great, that although a large number of hostels were provided during the War, many had disappeared and that since the War munitions hostels have in the nature of things been discontinued, forcing the women and girls who used them into already overcrowded homes.[96]

The outbreak of war marked the end of a concerted period of attention on the question of housing working women, and afterwards, their needs were relegated to second place, behind those of returning service-men. Mrs Cecil Chesterton, who had worked with Mary Higgs in the National Association, repeated her experiment of posing as a homeless woman in London in the 1920s and her experiences and findings were very similar.[97]

Mary Higgs continued her work in social welfare, but her interests turned in different directions. In the War she became involved in relief work for unemployed women, Bent House became a centre for War pensions work and for clubs and other activities to help women and young people. After the War she turned again to the question of homelessness, but this time of male, rather than, female homelessness. She continued to run the lodging house for women at Bent House, but from now on she concentrated primarily on the needs of boys and young men. She became involved in the Borstal Institution and her daughter said that she visited every hostel for homeless boys in England.[98] We do not know why Mary turned her attentions from women to men. The War disrupted many organizations and many people's lives. With the winning of a partial franchise for women in 1918, the heat had gone out of the women's question and much of the effort which had come together around the issue of suffrage dispersed. Possibly the National Association was an example of this.

Mary gave evidence before two more Departmental Committees, on Casual Ward Reform in 1924 and the Relief of the Casual Poor in 1929-30. In 1937 she was awarded the OBE in recognition of her work for Oldham. She died the same year at the age of eighty-three and her death was reported in the national press. The *Manchester Guardian* headlined their article 'Mrs Mary Higgs - Death of a Great Social

Reformer'[99] and the *Daily Despatch* and *Daily Herald* also carried articles about her life and work.

CONCLUSIONS

In its six years of existence the National Association for Women's Lodging Homes succeeded in holding a major national conference, drawing together an extensive and diverse network of interested societies and individuals, and in publishing a book, several pamphlets, and a comprehensive national directory of women's housing provision. It was also instrumental in the opening of a number of women's hostels. It was a dynamic body and certainly succeeded in its aims of collecting and disseminating information and linking together organizations and individuals. It was not successful in persuading municipalities to open lodging houses for women, but was making some headway in this direction. If war had not intervened, it is possible that more local authorities might have acceded to this demand.

What is most significant about the National Association is that it went further than other organizations in focusing specifically on the **housing** needs of single women and that it succeeded in placing the issue on the national agenda. It attracted support from organizations as diverse as the Charity Organization Society and the Fabian Society and drew together all the major bodies concerned with issues of women's welfare. Significantly, it was also a campaigning body, and here it went further than previous women's welfare societies in acting in an overtly political way - women were lobbying here and making demands. It also aimed its efforts at all women in need rather than differentiating between the respectable and the unrespectable. This is a considerable change in the way that women's housing needs were viewed, and must in part reflect the shift in thinking from the moralistic to the economic causation of poverty. Vagrancy and homelessness had become the focus of public concern. New solutions were

being considered and the creation of a 'social services state' under the Liberal ministry meant that the meeting of basic social needs was beginning to be seen as the province of government rather than private charity. It also coincided with an important moment in the woman's movement. A national network of women's welfare societies had combined in the NUWW, the NUWSS had been formed and the high profile activities of the suffragette movement all placed the question of women's rights high on the agenda.

A number of currents had come together which facilitated the creation of the National Association, but the main catalyst in its success was Mary Higgs. She was its inspiration, and its chief spokeswoman and it is her writings which form the literature of the Association. She was not the first woman to be concerned with the housing needs of single women, but she went beyond the work of earlier activists in systematically investigating the conditions and circumstances of homeless women, and in making an analysis of the social and economic factors which led to homelessness. Her scientific rigour gave credibility to the arguments of the National Association and her emotive writings lent great impact to its propaganda. There are paradoxes in her presentation of homelessness, as we have seen, possibly because she pitched her writings at a number of different levels and audiences. The fact that she had experienced the life of a homeless woman at first hand undoubtedly gave great force to her writings and she describes very vividly the cold, discomfort and degradation of life on the road for women. Her identification with the lives of homeless women required a great deal of courage and commitment. Unlike other middle-class women who worked among the very poor, she could not rely on her status as a lady for protection, nor the barrier of a uniform, but presented herself as a member of one of the most vulnerable groups in society - a female tramp.

In many ways Mary Higgs has the strongest claims to 'feminist' status of any of the women who have appeared in this study. She was a suffragist, she had no hesitation in claiming women's rights to housing and she campaigned on a very public platform for those rights. In terms of 'process' she also acted in a feminist way. She identified very strongly with the homeless women for whom she campaigned and called them her sisters, and she clearly had close bonds with the other women with whom she worked. The friendships she formed in Oldham with Sarah and Marjory Lees and Lady Emmott were important to her personally and helped form a milieu of committed 'public' women. They were involved in each other's public work in ways reminiscent of other networks of women activists in this study. 'Networking' was one of Mary Higgs' strong points and one of the major factors behind the success of the National Association. On a formal level, the links with the NUWW gave it access to a national grouping of women activists from many different fields, and the backing of the British Institute for Social Service, with its wide membership of prominent social reformers, gave it a high public standing. Mary's links with the Congregational church played an important part in her life and work. Her personal friendships with William Booth and W T Stead placed her in a milieu of influential figures in the world of social reform and their influence on her thinking is apparent. Her concerns with the Garden City Movement, pacificism and international friendship, mother and child welfare also place her at the forefront of progressive thought at the time.

By any account Mary Higgs was a remarkable woman. Active in many different fields, she created in the National Association a movement which brought together virtually every major organization concerned with women's welfare and succeeded in putting the neglected issue of single women's housing firmly on the map. Undoubtedly she could not have so effective without the support of her family and friends, and the success of the National Association was a tribute to the work of many other women.

It was an example of women acting together on a national scale in the cause of women. The fact that both the Association, and its creator - Mary Higgs of Oldham, 'mother of the homeless' and self-styled 'viatrix', are forgotten today brings home once more the marginalisation of single women and their housing needs in the historical record.

NOTES

1. Mary Higgs and Edward Hayward, Where shall she live? the homelessness of the woman worker, P S King and Sons, London, 1910, p.185

2. The work of the National Association is briefly discussed in S Watson and H Austerberry, Housing and homelessness: a feminist perspective, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986; an extract from Mary Higgs' essay, 'Three nights in women's lodging houses', is included in Peter Keating's collection of writings about the life of the poor, Into unknown England 1866-1913: selections from the social explorers, Fontana, 1976

3. Deborah Nord, Walking the Victorian streets: women representation and the city, Cornell University Press, 1995

4. Mary Higgs, The Life of Mary Higgs of Oldham, a memoir written by her daughter,printed for private circulation by Clare, Son & Co.Ltd, nd.

5. See obituaries of Mary Higgs in the Daily Despatch and Daily Herald, 20.3.1937.

6. The Girton College Register described Mary Higgs as 'a mystic, social reformer, poet, authoress, lecturer and preacher, (GCR 1869-1946)

7. In 1909 Mary Higgs attended the international conference of the National Council of Women in Toronto, see M Higgs, Mary Higgs of Oldham, p.21

8. M Higgs, Mary Higgs of Oldham, p.5.

9. The Twentieth Century Bible, 1898

10. M Higgs, Mary Higgs of Oldham, p.12

11. An estate of 500 acres was purchased for the Oldham Garden Suburb on which it was proposed to place eventually 600 house, Progress, October 1909, Vol.4, No.14, p.281

12. M Higgs, Mary Higgs of Oldham, p.11

13. For a description of their activities in Oldham see Miss Marjorie Lees, 'Who's who in the NCW', in Women in Council, Journal of the National Council of Women in Great Britain, No.26, Spring 1966, pp.3-6

14. H Pearl Adam, (ed), Women in Council, the Jubilee Book of the National Council of Women of Great Britain, Oxford University Press, 1945, p.22

15. Ibid

16. H Pearl Adam, (ed.), op.cit., p.85

17. M Higgs, Mary Higgs of Oldham, p.29

18. Ibid, p.27

19. Ibid, p.29

20. Ibid, p.11

21. Among the agencies which Mary Higgs visited in this country were the Hadleigh Farm Colony, the Police, Prevention of Cruelty to Children officers and Vigilance officers, and she also travelled to Denmark to investigate the Poor Law there, see Mary Higgs, preface to 'Essay on Vagrancy' in Glimpses into the Abyss, pp.vi, viii

22. See, for example, James Greenwood, A night in the workhouse, 1866; Jack London, The people of the abyss, 1902; Dennis Crane, Vicarious vagrant, 1910; Edward Wyrall, The spike, 1910; George Edwards, A vicar as vagrant, n.d.

23. See George Orwell, Down and out in Paris in London, Gollancz, 1933

24. Letter from J S Whitehead to the Oldham Chronicle, April 17th, 1937

25. Mary Higgs, Glimpses into the abyss, P S King & Sons, London, 1906, preface, p.vii

26. Mary Higgs, 'Five days and five nights as a tramp among tramps', in Glimpses into the Abyss, P S King & Sons, p.87

27. Mary Higgs, Glimpses into the abyss, preface, p.ix

28. Mary Higgs 'Essay on Vagrancy' won the Girton Gamble Prize of 1906, and is included in Glimpses into the Abyss.

29. Mary Higgs, Glimpses into the abyss, preface, p.ix

30. Ibid, p.x

31. Hugh Cunningham, The children of the poor: representations of childhood since the seventeenth century, Blackwell, 1991

32. Ibid, p.129

33. See M Higgs, Mary Higgs of Oldham, pp.20-21

34. Mary Higgs, 'Five days and five nights as a tramp among tramps', in A glimpse into the abyss, P S King & Sons, 1906, p.88

35. Ibid, p.99

36. Ibid, p.104

37. Ibid, p.108

38. Ibid

39. Ibid, p.129

40. Mary Higgs, 'Common lodging house life', in Glimpses into the absyss, p.249

41. Mary Higgs, 'Five days and five nights as a tramp among tramps', in Glimpses into the abyss, p.132

42. Ibid, pp.132-3

43. Mary Higgs, Glimpses into the Abyss, Appendix VII, Immorality as caused by destitution among women, p.323

44. Mary Higgs, 'Five days and five nights as a tramp among tramps', in Glimpses into the abyss, p.111

45. Ibid, p.94

46. Mary Higgs, 'Essay on vagrancy' in Glimpses into the abyss, 1906, p.24

47. This was included in Mary Higgs' 1906 collection of essays on homelessness, Glimpses into the abyss, op.cit

48. M Higgs, The life of Mary Higgs, p.18

49. This contained Mary Higgs' Essay on vagrancy, eight other essays describing her excursions into various forms of accommodation for homeless women and eight appendices.

50. Mary Higgs, 'Vagrancy and the industrial revolution', in Glimpses into the abyss, p.295

51. Mary Higgs, 'Common lodging house life', in Glimpses into the abyss, p.248

52. Mary Higgs, 'Three nights in women's lodging houses', in Glimpses into the Abyss, p.211

53. Mary Higgs and Edward Hayward, Where shall she live? The homelessness of the woman worker, P S King & Son, London, 1910, pp. 114-5

54. Mary Higgs, 'Three nights in women's lodging houses', in Glimpses into the abyss, p.214

55. Ibid, p.211

56. Mary Higgs, 'Five days and five nights as a tramp among tramps' in Glimpses into the abyss, p.106

57. Mary Higgs, 'Vagrancy and the industrial revolution', in Glimpses into the abyss, p.288

58. Ibid, p.290

59. Mary Higgs, 'Three nights in women's lodging houses', in Glimpses into the abyss, p.211

60. Ibid, p.214

61. Mary Higgs, Glimpses into the abyss, Appendix VII, Immorality as caused by destitution among women, p.323

62. Ibid, p.322

63. Mary Higgs and Edward Hayward, op cit, p.118

64. Ibid, p.155

65. Mary Higgs, 'The housing of the woman worker', in Progress, Vol.4, No.14, April 1909. p.167

66. Mary Higgs, Glimpses into the abyss, Appendix VIII Common lodging houses versus shelters, p.326

67. Progress, Vol.4, No.15, July 1909, p.191

68. Oldham Chronicle, 2.2.1924

69. British Institute of Social Service, Annual Report 1913, p.6

70. Progress, October 1906, Vol.1, no.4, p.323

71. British Institute for Social Service, Annual Report 1909, p.9

72. Ibid

73. Elizabeth Robins had taken an interest in women's homelessness and the white slave trade and in 1913 wrote a novel, *Where are you going to?* about a middle class woman who became a prostitute. See Angela V John, Elizabeth Robins, Staging a Life, Routledge, London, 1995.

74. Mary Higgs and Edward Hayward, Where shall she live? The homelessness of the women worker, P S King & Sons, 1910

75. Report of the proceedings of the National Conference on Lodging-House Accommodation for Women, 17 May 1911, p.4

76. Christine Collette, For Labour and for women: the Women's Labour League, 1906-18, Manchester University Press, 1989, p.84

77. Report of the proceedings of the National Conference on Lodging House Accommodation for Women, 17 May 1911, p.47

78. Report of the Proceedings of the National Conference on Lodging House Accommodation for Women, 1911, paper given by Mrs Charles Morrison, 'The failure to meet the need', p.35

79. Ibid, pp.42-46, Alderman W Thompson, 'Municipal housing for women'

80. Mary Higgs and Edward Hayward, op cit, p.89

81. Ibid, p.150

82. Mary Higgs, How to start a women's lodging house, National Association for Women's Lodging Homes, P.S King & Son Ltd, London, 1912

83. Ibid, p.15

84. British Institute for Social Service, Annual report, 1913, p.5

85. National Association for Women's Lodging Homes, Report for the Year 1913, p.12

86. National Association for Women' Lodging Homes, Report for the Year 1912, p.12

87. National Association for Women's Lodging Homes, Report for the Year 1913, pp.11-12

88. Report of the proceedings of the National Conference on Lodging House Accommodation for Women, 17 May 1911, p.11

89. Revised handbook of lodging homes for women and girls, appended to the 1913 Report of the National Association for Women's Lodging Homes

90. See National Association for Women's Lodging Homes, Report for 1915, p.5

91. National Association for Women's Lodging Homes, Report for the Year 1913, p.12

92. Among the charities with which she was involved was the Duchess of Marlborough Homes for Prisoners' Wives and Children. It was reported in Progress that 'she attended at least once a week and met all the women on their first arrival', Progress, July 1910, Vol.5, No.19

93. For example, Queen Mary sent a letter 'expressing sympathy' to the 1911 conference of the NAWLH, (Report of the Proceedings of the National Conference on Lodging-house Accommodation for Women, p.8); Queen Alexandria and Princess Victoria visited the Mary Curzon Hostel in 1913, (Mary Higgs, 'A night in the "Mary Curzon" Hostel' in the 1913 Report of the National Association for Women's Lodging Homes, p.9)

94. National Association for Women's Lodging Homes, Report for the year 1914, p.11

95. M Higgs, Mary Higgs of Oldham, p.26

96. Progress, Vol.18, No 63, July-September, 1923, p.12

97. Mrs Cecil Chesterton, In darkest London, Stanley Paul & Co., 1926

98. M Higgs, Mary Higgs of Oldham, p.27

99. Manchester Guardian, 20 March,1937

Chapter 9

CONCLUSIONS

At the beginning of this investigation, my first thoughts were that housing and home are of central importance to women, and were much more forcibly so in the last century when most women were dependent upon men for housing and could make few choices of their own in this area, and that the domestic ideology of the period held up a romanticised vision of home which was distinctly at odds with the experiences of many women.

My ensuing investigation was concerned with the connection between the role which housing and home played in women's lives, the gender inequalities which were reflected in housing, and the extent to which early women activists organized around these issues. I thus posed the question of whether women had seen through, and challenged, the ideology of the home and sought evidence of any early feminist campaign based around women's right to housing independent of their relationship to men. Preliminary investigation identified three groups of women active in housing work in various ways: Octavia Hill and her fellow workers, the Girls' Friendly Society and the National Association for Women's Lodging Homes. Their work provided provided clues that women may have been involved in housing on a larger scale than had previously been recognised. Among the questions I wished to investigate were the extent of the work of the women involved in these areas, the different ways in which they perceived and responded to women's housing situation, and how this might have changed over time. Importantly, I also wished to explore the 'feminist' dimensions of women's work in housing, in terms of both overt aims and ways of working, and the question of

whether the issue of housing could be said to have formed part of the early women's movement. The way in which women's work in housing fitted into the housing reform movement of the period - and why it has been overlooked in histories of the housing reform movement - were also key issues to address.

The research carried out has shown that the housing situation of women of all classes was affected by their inferior legal and social status, and their economic dependency upon men. But, in terms of material housing - as might have been expected - it was women of the working classes who were most disadvantaged. Married women of the working classes not only shared in the general misery of the wretched housing conditions of the poor, but suffered especially under the expectations of their domestic role and the brutality to which some of them were exposed in the home. It has become clear that there was indeed a huge gap between the ideology of the home and the reality of it for many women. This was even more marked in the housing situation of single women of the working classes, for whom a home of their own was virtually impossible to achieve. Analysis of census returns of women's employment over the period has shown that for the majority of single working women, employed as domestic servants, dress-workers or shop assistants, 'living-in' was the common way in which they were housed. While experiences of this varied, living-in often involved exploitation and miserable living conditions, and the fact that workers' accommodation was tied to their employment made their housing position extremely insecure. Homelessness was a spectre which hung over many women. Casual wards, the statutory provision made for homeless people, were generally so undesirable that few homeless women made use of them. Many more lived in common lodging houses, but conditions here were very basic and often intimidating to women. Some women made resort to charitable shelters and labour homes, but again were small in number. In all these places the proportion of women to men was very low and it appears that

uncounted numbers of homeless women found refuge elsewhere. It has become apparent that there was a particular problem with women's housing in the period, and that women's housing experiences differed from those of men.

I have also discovered that there was a huge movement of women active in housing. Octavia Hill and her band of women workers managed housing for thousands of poor working-class tenants in London and sparked imitations throughout Britain and overseas. The Girls' Friendly Society provided both a national and international network of accommodation for single working women of respectable character. Many other women's organizations provided servants' homes, and rescue and preventitive homes. The National Association of Women's Lodging Homes, while not being primarily a housing provider, was a major national initiative in promoting lodging-house accommodation for women. The scale of women's activities in housing was truly impressive, but the questions of how this fitted into the housing reform movement of the period, and whether this was part of a conscious campaign based around women's housing inequalities, are complex ones.

As we saw in chapter three, histories of the housing reform movement are generally concerned with charting the move from the laissez-faire, market-driven approach to housing of the early nineteenth century, to the rise to dominance of municipal housing post the First World War. Explanations of the process differ, but attention is focused on the issue of the housing of working-class families, or more specifically, the working-class male and his dependants. The appalling conditions in which the urban working classes lived have been extensively documented, but little attention has been paid to the particular experiences of women living in such conditions, nor to the housing situation of single working women. The great work which was done by public health reformers, the efforts of the philanthropic housing movement, and the key moments

of legislation are recorded, but there is little room in these accounts for the work of women in housing. Women were unable to act in matters of public policy, legislation or administration, and they are, therefore, excluded from histories which focus on these areas. Octavia Hill is an exception to this general neglect of women's activities in housing, but her work is often dismissed as small-scale, and irrelevant to the march forward to municipal housing.

Women's absence from the historical record of the housing reform movement is largely a matter of definition. If the working class is defined as the male working class, and housing is defined as family housing, then work which benefitted single working women does not figure. If the 'reform' which is counted is that which falls within the legislative, or policy, sphere, then voluntary work is discounted. However, as we have seen, women's voluntary societies provided accommodation on a large scale for single women, who would otherwise have been at risk of homelessness, and made a significant contribution to improving their living conditions. The National Association for Women's Lodging Homes did pioneering work in exposing the problem of women's homelessness and added to the provision for this group. Octavia Hill made an innovative contribution to the management of working-class housing which not only influenced a large number of other housing developments both here and overseas, but also established principles of good housing management which form the basis of social housing methods today. The work of these women has been marginalised in the literature, but if housing reform is defined as work which provided new forms of accommodation to groups in need, as did the Girls' Friendly Society; which researched housing problems and posed solutions, as did the National Association; and which changed the approach to the management of working-class housing, as did Octavia Hill - then these women were an integral part of the housing reform movement.

The question of how these movements fitted into the women's movement of the time, and whether the women involved saw their work in housing in terms of redressing gender inequalities, is again a complex one in which much rests on matters of definition. Can they be described as feminist in their aims, did they display feminist methods of working, did they see through the gendered ideology of the home and attempt to challenge it? Were the women involved representative of women activists of the time? Before going on to discuss these issues it is worth making some more general comments about the three case studies of Octavia Hill, the Girls' Friendly Society and the National Association of Women's Lodging Homes.

Firstly, while the presentation of case studies seems to suggest a chronological progression, there was considerable overlap in time between them. Octavia Hill began her work in the 1860s, the GFS shortly afterwards in the 1870s and the National Association much later in 1909, but all three groups were at work at the same time in the Edwardian period. And while Octavia Hill, Mary Townsend and Mary Higgs seem to represent different generations, they were almost exact contemporaries. (Incidently, both Octavia Hill and Mary Townsend were present at the Queen's Golden Jubilee, although in a different capacities, Octavia Hill as a guest in her own right and Mary Townsend as the wife of an MP). Secondly, the differences between these three groups, in terms of composition, size and approach make meaningful comparison between them problematical. Whereas Octavia Hill and her fellow workers worked primarily with families, the GFS and the National Association were concerned with single working women. However, while the GFS aimed its activities at 'respectable' young women, the National Association worked for the benefit of a much wider group, including those women who were living what would be considered abandoned lives. The latter two groups were formally constituted organizations, but Octavia Hill eschewed this sort of organization and worked through a loose network of colleagues

and friends. The GFS dwarfed the other two groups in terms of the numbers of women involved, and it stands out in including working women in its membership. Both the GFS and Octavia Hill were provider bodies, whereas the National Association concentrated on campaigning. The GFS was a religious organization set within the structure of the Anglican Church, but the other two groups were determinedly secular in their approach. The class composition of these three groups also differed considerably. The Associates of the GFS were upper-class women, often titled ladies. The benefactors of Octavia Hill's work, and the committee members of the National Association were also of a higher class profile, but the women who worked in housing management and the working members of the National Association were predominantly of the middle classes.

However, parallels can also be seen between the work of these different movements. The National Association, with its campaigning orientation and emphasis on women's right to lodging-house accommodation, at first glance seems very different from the more conservative GFS, but underlying both organizations was the same concern with women's sexual vulnerability and their need for protection. For both of these groups there was a conflation of women's housing needs with their sexuality. Concern about women's homelessness was inextricably connected with anxiety about prostitution, with the result that there was no concession that single women should be able to live independently. Indeed the campaign of the National Association and the provision of the GFS were both largely aimed at keeping young women out of independent lodgings and under supervision. Institutional living for single women, rather than a home of their own was the aim. Interestingly in this respect, Octavia Hill, was in some ways more progressive than the women who followed. She refrained from preaching to her tenants over their sexual morals and housed single women in her schemes without seeming to think they should be living in institutions.

But, women were being drawn into the city by economic interests, no other provision was being made for them and women's voluntary efforts met the gap. The perceived dangers besetting single women stemmed from their lack of safe and secure housing, and although it was not articulated as such, the issue of housing was a very real one for societies such as the GFS. The same concern also motivated organizations such as the YWCA, the Metropolitan Association for Befriending Young Servants and the Ladies' Associations for the Care of Friendless Girls, which all worked on a very large scale to provide accommodation for single working women. This was a movement which illustrates very clearly that Victorian and Edwardian women saw that housing was a prerequisite to the safety and well-being of single women.

The GFS and Octavia Hill and her fellow workers both shared a concern with working in a holistic way with their respective client groups, and aimed at building communities which would encompass every aspect of their lives. Entertainments, holidays, outings, classes, clubs and saving schemes all played a part in their schemes, and there was the same emphasis on the value of personal and individual work between Associate and Member, and housing manager and tenant. Mary Higgs' work was of a more political nature, aimed at making bringing about policy changes on a national level, but she too was concerned with the 'small tragedies' of the lives of homeless women, and went as far as to make her home in a hostel for homeless women.

Significantly, all these movements involved middle and upper-class women working for the benefit of the working classes, either families or single working women. This was typical of other voluntary and charitable groups of the time and inevitably raises questions about the tensions between social welfare and social control and of the complex relationship between class and gender. Undoubtedly, elements of control were there; Octavia Hill wished to 'improve' her tenants and used the provision of

housing amenities and the granting, or with-holding, of her approval as a way of achieving this. Both the GFS and the National Association were concerned with the moral supervision of the women with whom they worked. However, genuine concern for the welfare of the groups with whom they worked seems to have been the major motivating factor of all three groups. Octavia Hill was deeply distressed at the misery which poor families experienced at the hands of unscrupulous commercial landlords and at the material bleakness of their lives; the ladies of the GFS were concerned with the loneliness and vulnerablility of young working women far from home, and Mary Higgs demonstrated the extent of her commitment to the outcasts of society by undertaking personal journies into the 'abyss'. Reaching across the class divide was a similar element in the social philosophy of all three groups.

In none of these movements do working-class women appear as actors. This is not surprising; the daily struggle for existence of the poor left little time, or opportunity, to undertake such work, and few working-class women would have had the necessary access to finance - or the confidence - for it. However, it is perhaps surprising that middle-class women were silent on the question of their own housing position. There were comments on the confining existence of a 'daughter at home' and there were also protests against the compulsion to marry, but the right to live independently in housing of their own choice was not one which was raised. The right to work, to education and to an existence outside the home, took precedence for middle-class activists, and women who achieved this generally also succeeded in living how they chose. These women were not working to provide housing for themselves, and while some of Octavia Hill's workers were paid, neither the GFS Associates nor the National Association members drew salaries for their work. Altruism was there in great measure.

Finally, the hallmark of these groups was that they saw need and organised to meet it. The strength of women's work in housing was in its practicality. Octavia Hill wrote in dismissive terms about theory, and set about improving and providing housing for people in the extreme of housing need. Her careful design of housing schemes, and the detailed arrangements made for laundry, cleaning and repair scemes, play and recreation, all contributed to making the day-to-day life of her tenants much more bearable. The GFS attempted no structural understanding of the social and economic position of the women with whom they were working, but provided accommodation for women where it was needed, and put in place welfare and training schemes which made a tangible material difference to their lives. The National Association had a very different approach from the other two groups, in that its founder, Mary Higgs made a systematic exploration of the conditions and causes of homelessness, and made connections between unemployment and homelessness. It was primarily a campaigning rather than a providing body, but it too, rather than wait for municipalities to open lodging houses for women, set to and opened a number of its own lodging houses.

Three very different groups, with different constituencies and different aims, but with housing as a part or whole of their work. All three were clearly women's movements, but what do they exemplify in terms of <u>the</u> women's movement? Octavia Hill is significant in women's history because she initiated a new profession for women, that of housing management, and thus helped pioneer a route from the private to the public sphere; the GFS because it was the largest women's organization in Victorian and Edwardian Britain, and the National Association because it campaigned for women's rights in housing. In different ways, therefore, they can all be said to have contibuted to the growing women's movement of the period. However, there are complexities and ambiguities within this.

Only the National Association made any mention of women's rights in its literature, or drew attention to the differential treatment of women in housing. However, it also framed much of its message in terms of very traditional concern over sexual morality. The GFS deliberately shunned any mention of women's rights and presented its work in terms of service and duty, but it talked of 'sisterhood' and was conscious of itself as a women's movement. Octavia Hill avoided any reference to sisterhood, or women's rights, and it is evident that she prioritised duties over rights, but, by their example, she and her fellow workers, showed that women could play a meaningful role in the public world, and carry out professional work.

There were distinct differences in the aims of these three groups, and only the National Association, with its forthright demands for equal treatment for women in housing, can be defined as overtly 'feminist'. However, as discussed in the introduction, it is not only aims which constitute a feminist approach. Process is perhaps as important a measure, and identification with women, and particular ways of working together also marked the women's movement of the time. All three groups were run predominantly, if not exclusively, by women, and the GFS and the National Association worked solely for the benefit of women. Octavia Hill's work was aimed at working-class families, rather than specifically at women, but she showed much sympathy with her women tenants and insisted that all the workers were women. But the ways in which these three groups organized themselves were very different. Octavia Hill set her face firmly against formal structures, committees and hierarchies in her work, because she thought it too important and too urgent to be slowed down by cumbersome bureauocracy. Unlike the leaders of the WSPU, however, who rejected the committee approach on the same grounds, she did not want military-type command over her followers, but urged them to develop their own work in their own way. She provides an example of how to be effective without formal organization and this has been

characterised as a feminist approach. The GFS and National Association, on the other hand, adopted more 'male' models of work, with committees, officers, hierarchical structures and the recruiting of the 'great and the good' as patrons. The speed with which the National Association organized itself in 1909, in comparison with the slow and unsure process of the GFS in the 1870s, shows a marked increase in the confidence of women. The originators of the GFS said that they had to learn the business of running committees from their fathers and brothers and they were clearly unfamiliar with this male world of public accountability. Thirty years later Mary Higgs set up the National Association without comment and apparently without any of the difficulties which the early GFS ladies had experienced. The rapid development of the National Association into an organization capable of co-ordinating a major national conference and lobbying the LCC, shows that these were not the faltering steps of inexperienced women, but women already active in other spheres and confident in their abilities.

In common with other women's movements of the time, all three groups operated through women's networks of friends, families and neighbourhoods. Women were recruited from among friends and relations; working closely together promoted friendships and social networks were carried over into the world of work. There is evidence that some women were involved in all three movements. The GFS was represented on the National Association; Lady Emmott of the National Association became one of the vice-presidents of the Women Housing Managers' Association in 1926, along with Lady Selborne, who was one of Octavia Hill's benefactors, and also a member of the Central Committee of the GFS. Links were also formed with women active in other areas of work. We see, for example, members of all three groups involved in the suffrage movement, in women's education, in COS and Poor Law work, in pacificism, and the garden city movement. The National Union of Women Workers

seems to have formed a particularly important network of women active in women's causes. Women from all three groups were represented in its membership - from the National, Association, Mary Higgs, Lady Emmott, Sarah and Marjorie Lees, from the GFS, Lady Knightley and Miss Townend and from the world of housing management, Henrietta Barnett, Beatrice Webb, Eva Maclaren and Sophia Lonsdale. Octavi Hills and Emma Cons are also listed as speakers at NUWW conferences in the 1900s. While we have no record of a social network matching this professional one, it seems very likely that one existed.

The experience of being part of all-female group also had an effect upon the women involved. As a number of writers have commented, women's societies and groupings provided a supportive environment in which women could develop their skills and confidence.[1] This was particularly marked in the case of Octavia Hill's fellow workers, many of whom went on to outstanding public careers, but the GFS also gave its women organizers opportunities to exercise their talents and energies. The Associates were for the most part ladies, members of the upper classes, who, unlike Octavia Hill's housing workers, were not finding their way into the world of paid work, but belonged more in the tradition of benevolent parish work. However, their creation of a large and effective organization shows that among their members were some outstandingly capable women. The National Association provided training and experience in campaigning and lobbying work and empowered women to challenge the local authorities in their own towns. These women achieved their own agency through their work and this was a crucial part of the movement from the private to the public for women.

The question remains of whether the women involved in these movements accepted or challenged the dominant ideology of the home. There are two levels of ideology

evident here, that of the home, and that of women's role and rightful sphere of duties. All three groups were well aware of the reality of living conditions for the women with whom they worked, but all three also eulogised the home and the transcending power it possessed over physical realities. Home occupied almost a mystical place in the eyes of the Victorians and Edwardians and virtually all organs of opinion of the time subscribed to it. Indeed, the importance of home, and women's role within it, was one of the grounds used by early feminists to justify women's claims to a voice in legislation. It was not until the modern women's movement that feminists began to analyse the oppressive aspects of the home for women, and it is not surprising that we do not see these earlier women activists voicing attacks on the gendered nature of domestic ideology.

There was also considerable effort on the part of the women involved in these movements to present their activities as suitable work for women. The language which the GFS Associates used to describe their work was that of mothering, duty and service. Octavia Hill also presented her work in this way and she premised her creation of housing work as a career for women on the basis of women's special role within the family. Mary Higgs stands out in this regard as she described her work as being in the nature of scientific exploration, and undertook what had previously been seen as the male role of observer and social analyst.

There were paradoxes inherent in these groups arising from fundamental tensions between aims, informing ideologies, and practical outcomes. The GFS, while promoting a very traditional model of 'maidenly modesty' and humble service for women, also provided training for its working members which opened up new employment opportunities for them outside domestic service. Their establishment of a comprehensive system of accommodation lodges and welfare benefits for their

members in many ways made the single life much more tenable for women. For the Associates, their involvement could be limited to the local parish branch, but for those who chose, it could entail work at a national level and responsibility far beyond what could be construed as an an extension of family duties. In the case of Octavia Hill, her lifestyle was distinctly at odds with the domestic ideology she was promoting. She became a successful public woman herself and helped create a new role for women outside the home. Mary Higgs did not seem to feel the compulsion to present her work as 'womanly'. She was concerned to reveal the conditions in which homeless women lived, and her undercover expeditions took her far beyond both the local sphere, and what could be thought of as woman's sphere, into the world of the homeless. However, she too used the language of mothering on occasion, and along with Octavia Hill and the ladies of the GFS, she talked about the home in reverential tones.

Rather than overtly challenging current ideology of the home and women's position within it, leading women within the housing movement tended to subscribe to it. And possibly they used it strategically - in the way they presented their work publicly - so as to achieve a wide spectrum of support. The extent to which they were paying lip-service to these notions, or believed in them, is difficult to determine. The facts of their lives indicate that they saw the limitations of a socially conservative domestic ideology which circumscribed women's lives. It is perfectly possible to hold apparently inconsistent ideas, however, and possibly, in the philosophy of many of the women concerned, they were not incompatible. Historically too, it is perhaps too easy to see the Victorian and Edwardian ideology of separate spheres and of gendered roles as static, whereas the late nineteenth century saw considerable development. Both as cause and consequence of the first women's movement, the period was transitional, exhibiting tensions and contradictions in values, lifestyles and aspirations.

This study has focused on the activities of an elite group, women of the upper and middle classes working on behalf of their 'poorer sisters' during the period 1860-1914. The question remains of how typical such women were. Octavia Hill, Mary Townsend and Mary Higgs emerge as pioneers and moving spirits of their movements, and none of them, by virtue of this, can be considered as typical figures. However, the fact that they attracted considerable followings demonstrates that they articulated views and concerns which had resonance for women, and acted in ways which made them attractive role models. But, despite the size of the GFS, and the high public profile of the National Association in the Edwardian period - and the great work which they did for the welfare of single women - it is only Octavia Hill who has attracted scholarly attention in histories of either the housing reform movement or the women's movement.

Certain sorts of histories are prioritised over others. In terms of housing, those which focus upon the role of public health reformers, legislative landmarks, and urban change have little room for the day-to-day experiences of women. In terms of the women's movement, it is the campaigns around the Contagious Diseases Acts, married women's property rights, education and the vote which have captured attention. Social and economic historians have also focused upon the position of working women in the period and it is curious that housing, so central to women's well-being, is largely overlooked. Possibly the deferential and conventional attitudes of women working in societies such as the GFS, and their decidedly unliberated language, make them unattractive subjects for feminists to study. However, as this study has shown, women working in housing management, in the GFS and in the National Association for Women's Lodging Homes, made a real difference to the lives of women in housing need - and to the lives of the women involved - and were an important part of both the housing reform movement and the early women's movement.

There are a number of ways in which this kind of historical research could usefully be taken further. The role of the National Union of Women Workers in bringing together a very wide range of women activists emerges as a crucial one in the co-ordination of the women's movement. There has been no analysis written of its history in this period, yet preliminary search of its archives has shown that it included virtually every women's organization in its membership, including those associated with housing.[2]

The alliances formed between women working in housing and the social purity movement are also worth exploring in greater depth. Here the role of W T Stead and his campaigning work around prostitution was clearly a key one. An in-depth of women's societies in a town outside London would also be useful in order to examine on a local scale the development of women's housing work, and the mechanisms of women's networking in greater detail. The stance of more overtly politically active women on housing, particularly those on the Left, would be interesting to explore, as would women's housing activities in local government in the early twentieth century.

Finally, it would be rewarding to follow up this study with an exploration of what happened in women's housing after the First World War. We know that the methods of Octavia Hill were continued by women trained in her tradition and that these were taken up by housing associations, and to a certain extent by local authorities,[3] but that the housing needs of single women remained the province of the voluntary sector. The investigations of Mrs Cecil Chesterton into London's lodging houses and shelters in the 1920s and 30s showed that little had changed for women after the First World War.[4] She set up the Cecil Homes for homeless women in London, which are still in existence today, and her work would be worth exploring.

It was originally my intention to extend the thesis by a comparison with the late twentieth century, but this proved too ambitious a project. It is possible, however, to make a few observations about change and continuity over the period. Housing

standards have improved out of all recognition over the last hundred years. Slum clearance programmes, the large scale housing reconstruction which followed the Second World War and higher standards of housing construction mean that the overcrowding and the insanitary housing of the last century have largely disappeared. There has also been a radical change in the structure of housing tenure. The private landlord has been replaced by local authorities and housing associations as the major source of housing for those on lower incomes, and the right-to-buy legislation passed in the 1980s means that many more people in this group now live in owner-occupation. Homelessness and destitution have not disappeared, but they are no longer seen on the large scale on which they once were.

There have also been a number of changes which have affected the housing position of women in particular. Domestic service virtually disappeared after the Second World War, and with it the living-in system, outside a few specialised sectors. The practice of living in lodgings or boarding houses has also virtually disappeared. There are now far more occupational opportunities open to women, and higher pay enables many more women to live in independent housing. Single parenthood has lost its stigma, and to have a child outside marriage is no longer the personal disaster it once was. It does not entail being cast out-of-doors in disgrace, and lone parents are among the priority groups for local authority housing.

However, there are also a number of parallels between the two periods. As a number of writers have shown, women continue to be paid less than men, government housing policy and provision continues to be aimed at the family, and the needs of single homeless people are generally left to the voluntary sector.[5] Women's housing position continues to be determined by their economic dependency upon men and women are still primarily housed by virtue of their position as wife or mother. Single women have

less access to owner-occupation or good quality rented accommodation. The work of Moira Munro and Susan Smith in the 1980s showed that, holding other factors constant, women with partners were an astonishingly hundred times more likely be in owner-occupation as women who were single. For men having a partner had no direct affect on tenure attainment.[6] The domestic ideology constructed in the last century is still an important force in shaping women's lives and the belief that women [should] relate primarily to the home and the family has by no means disappeared. A survey published by MORI in 1995 showed that about half of women and men in Britain accept that the husband's job is to earn the money; the wife's job is to care for the home.[7] Such assumptions are also built into social policy arrangements. Feminist critiques of the post-war welfare state show that the patriarchal attitudes of nineteenth century Britain are still evident today. It is presupposed both that women are men's dependants, and because of this, women are not recognised as citizens in the same sense as are men.[8] In terms of housing policy, both the major political parties deem the conventional family to be the appropriate unit to be supported through provision.[9] However, domestic violence and sexual abuse remain features of family life, and the lack of access to alternative safe housing, and financial dependence upon a partner, mean that often women remain in such positions because there is no real alternative.[10]

Women are still found in small numbers in the provision made for homeless people. Single homeless women, who do not fall into priority categories for rehousing, such as ill-health or parental responsibility, are dependent upon provision made in the voluntary sector. However, the range of provision for homeless people continues to be dominated by men, and there are few women-only facilities.[11] Ironically, the abolition of the workhouse following the Second World War, and the closure in the 1980s of the

reception centres which replaced them, has meant that the statutory obligation to provide for homeless people has also disappeared.

In terms of women working in housing management there has been a sharp turnround from the position of the last century. Men have entered the profession and now dominate it at management levels. Recent surveys have shown that while both local authority housing departments and housing associations are largely staffed by women, they are in a small minority in senior positions.[12] From having created housing management as a profession for women, women are now marginalised from the positions of authority within it.

To return to the position in Oxford with which I began this thesis. There are now only two women only housing organizations providing for single women - the GFS and the YWCA - compared to five in 1900. The GFS has a house for seven working girls and the YWCA a hostel for a hundred young women, mostly students and working women. There is now also a women's refuge for women fleeing domestic violence. There are four mixed hostels for homeless people, which have between them some 150 beds, but women are always in a small minority in them. Two homes for mothers and babies have closed in the last few years and there is now only a Life hostel offering accommodation to this group. Women's homelessness has not gone away however. A survey carried out in Oxford in 1987 counted in one month fifty-five women who were actually homeless, that is, staying in one of the homelessness hostels. Twenty-seven women who were potentially homeless were also counted, that is, women who appeared at various agencies with urgent housing problems, but did not materialise in the provision made for homeless people.[13] A smaller survey carried out in 1996 found fifty-four homeless women, with the same proportions of actually and potentially homeless women.[14] This confirms the view that hostel-living is unacceptable to many

women, and rather than go into this sort of accommodation, they remain as the 'hidden homeless'.

Women who do use hostels and shelters, or who are visible as homeless on the streets, tend to be those who have been homeless for a long time or who have alcohol, drugs or mental health problems.[15] Thus stereotypes of homelessness are perpetuated. 'Edna, the inebriate woman' or 'a bag lady' are most people's vision of a homeless woman rather than women whose relationship with their partner or parents has broken down, or who has been suddenly evicted, or who cannot find affordable accommodation.[16] Where, however, provision is made which is acceptable to women, as Mary Higgs found out at the beginning of the century, women will use it. The YWCA in Oxford say that they are always full and could fill three times as many beds. The YWCA is an organization which has succeeded in avoiding the stigma which is associated with so many hostels. This is partly because it offers accommodation of a high standard, and partly because it takes in a mix of people, women in work and full-time education as well as those in more difficult housing circumstances. Clearly more of this sort of provision is needed.[17]

At the beginning of this research I knew little about the women whose lives and work I was going to investigate. I had heard of Octavia Hill, and knew that she was involved in Victorian housing reform; I vaguely knew of the GFS through its housing work in Oxford, but I knew nothing about its great history: I had never heard of the National Association of Lodging Homes for Women. Feminist scholars have commented on the way in which the process of research affects the investigator and the impossibility of remaining detached from the issues and personalities which are under investigation.[18] In this case, it has involved reading the personal letters of Octavia Hill, to her sisters, intimate friends and fellow workers for a period covering virtually the whole of her life

from her early teens to her death at the age of seventy four. These are very revealing and it has been difficult to read of her personal thoughts and worries, her affection, and her often humorous comments without becoming engaged with her at a personal level myself. I have become fond of Octavia and perhaps somewhat defensive of her and it has annoyed me to see the way in which she has been misrepresented by male housing historians. I have also been greatly impressed by the other women in this study: Mary Townsend with her compassion for lonely girls far from home, her life-long commitment to their cause and her willingness to democratise the GFS; Mary Higgs, one of the first Girton girls, who used her intellect to grapple with the problems of homeless women and went out on the road herself to experience the life of a homeless woman. Above all, I have been impressed by the way in which the women involved worked together, how bonds of friendship overcame political differences and how women acted across other spheres of interest.

It has also been somewhat salutary to recognise that the women and homelessness group with which I was involved in the 1980s repeated the same processes of research, campaigning, holding conferences, compiling of information and opening of women-only hostels as did the National Association some seventy years earlier. And even more salutary to realise that we also consisted of middle-class women with different, but equally preconceived ideas of the sort of provision which homeless women needed. Different times and different circumstances, but the same basic issue of women's homelessness and of their exclusion from provision, set against a period of feminist organization, resulted in a very similar response.

Housing has acted as a lens through which to view both the position of women in Victorian and Edwardian Britain and also the early women's movement. It has not emerged as a single 'great cause' in the way that campaign for the vote has, but it has

illustrated much about the way in which working-class women lived in the period and the sorts of concern and action which this gave rise to. Women were not able to act directly in matters of policy and legislation nor did they command the funds to build on a grand scale, but they circumvented exclusion from these spheres and acted together in different ways to improve or provide housing. In the process activists opened up new routes of participation in public policy for themselves. Octavia Hill, invited to give evidence at one Royal Commission and to be a member of another, the GFS holding a grand ceremony in Westminster Hall in 1911 to mark the raising of £20,000 for the provision of new hostels, Mary Higgs organizing a national conference on women's housing in the Guildhall, all were symbolic of women's move onto the public stage. It is a history which is generally absent from accounts of the housing reform movement and the women's movement, and this silence meant that much of the practical lessons of the first women's movement needed to be relearned in the second women's movement. This lack of inter-generational continuity in feminism; our ignorance of our own history, is one important spur and validation of feminist research.

NOTES

1. See, for example, P Levine, Feminist lives in Victorian England: private lives and public commitments, Basil Blackwell, 1990, M Vicinus, Independent women: work and community for single women 1850-1920, Virago Press Ltd., 1985; L Faderman, Surpassing the love of men: romantic friendship and love between women from the Renaissance to the present, The Women's Press Ltd., 1985;

2. Papers of the National Council of Women

3. See M Brion, Women in the housing service, Routledge, 1995

4. See Mrs Cecil Chesterton, In darkest London, Stanley Paul & Co., 1926

5. See, for example, S Watson and H Austerberry, Housing and homelessness: a feminist perspective, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986; J Neale, Theorising homelessness:contemporary sociological and feminist perspectives in R Burrows, N Pleace, D Quilgars, (eds), Homelessness and social policy, Routledge, 1997; R Gilroy and R Woods, (eds), Housing women, Routlege, 1994

6. M Munro and S Mith, 'Gender and housing: broadening the debate', in Housing Studies, Vol.4, No.1, p.6

7. See Catherine Hakim, Mummy, I *want* to be a housewife, Times Higher Education Supplement, 26 April 1996

8. See Carole Pateman, The disorder of women: democracy, feminism and political theory, Polity Press, 1989

9. The Conservative Government White Paper, Our Future Homes, 1995, stated that 'allocation schemes should reflect the underlying values of our society. They should balance specific housing needs and the need to support married couples who take a responsible attitude to family life, so that tomorrow's generation grows up in a stable environment'. New Labour also emphasises the importance of the family unit as a social institution, and has proposed the provision of medium-term, deferred repayment, interest-free loans of £5,000 to young couples without access to capital of their own - with marriage as the test of eligibity. Peter Mandelson and Roger Liddle quoted in The Guardian, 24 February 1995

10. Anne Lander, Prioritising pipe dreams, Housing, July/August 1997, p.11

11. See P Kemp, Characterics of single homeless people, England, in R Burrows, N Pleace and D Quilgars, op.cit., p.72

12. See Tina Ajibade, 'No room at the top', in Housing, April 1997 and Kate Millar, Room at the top, Roof, May + June 1995

13. Oxford Women and Homelessness Action Group, Survey of homeless women in Oxford, 1987, unpublished.

14. Karen Kuehne, The gap between the spires; a study of homelessness among single women in Oxford, 1987-1996, Independent study carried out for the MSc in Housing Studies, Oxford Brookes University, 1997, unpublished.

15. See surveys quoted above.

16. Ibid

17. Sadly, in March 1999 the YWCA announced that they are to dissolve themselves and hand over the management of their housing projects to other organizations.

18. See Mary Maynard and June Purvis, (eds.), Researching women's lives from a feminist perspective, Taylor & Francis Ltd, 1995

APPENDIX 1: HOUSING SCHEMES IN LONDON ASSOCIATED WITH OCTAVIA HILL

Year	Scheme	Description
1865	Paradise Place (Marylebone)	3 houses
1866	Freshwater Place (Marylebone)	5 cottages and 1 large house and garden
1869	Barrett's Court (Oxford Street)	49 rooms contained in several blocks of houses demolished and rebuilt as Sarsden Buildings and St Christopher Buildings.
1873	St Pancras	2 houses
	Lambeth	Block of model dwellings
	Walmer Street & Walmer Place (Marylebone)	38 houses
	Edward's Place, (Marylebone)	1 house
1874	Drury Lane	Large block of tenements
	St Jude's (Whitechapel)	Part of a court.
1877	Westminster	Small block of houses
	Hereford Dwellings, Chelsea	Block of artisan dwellings
	St Judes, (Whitechapel)	15 houses
1879	Marylebone	2 new blocks
1884	Green Street, (Deptford)	48 houses
	Southwark	Several groups of courts
1885	Deptford	78 houses
	Southwark	49 houses
1886	Horace Street, (Marylebone)	3 houses
1889	Ossington Buildings, (Marylebone)	9 blocks
1890	White Cross Cottages	6 cottages
1893	Westbourne Buildings, (Paddington)	Block of model dwellings
	Southwark	9 cottages
1894	Almond Cottages, Lisson Grove, (Marylebone)	6 cottages
	Garden Street, (Westminster)	19 cottages
	Southwark	5 cottages
1896	Lisson Grove, (Marylebone)	5 cottages
	Southwark	45 tenements
	Southwark	6 cottages
1897	The Strand	Block of buildings
	Street near Lisson Grove	2 groups of tenements, 6 cottages.

Year	Scheme	Description
1899	Notting Hill	5 houses
	Marylebone	9 blocks of buildings
	Whitehill Houses (Southwark)	24 3-roomed tenements
	St Katharine's Road, (Notting Hill)	20 houses
	Regency Street and Hyde Place (Westminster)	New streets of housing
	Vauxhall Bridge Road, (Westminster)	Unknown number of houses
1901	Southwark	50 houses
	Lambeth	160 houses cleared and rebuilt
1902	St Katharine's Road, (Notting Hill)	45 houses
1903	Walworth Estate	500-600 houses cleared and rebuilt
	Notting Hill	12 cottages, 2 houses
1904	Horace Street	2 houses
	Notting Hill	6 houses
1906	St Katharine's Road	5 houses
	Notting Hill	15 cottages
1911	Notting Hill	4 houses
	Notting Hill	8 houses

Source: Octavia Hill's letters on housing, 1864-1911, edited by Elinor Southwood Ouvry, Adelphi Bookshop, 1933

APPENDIX 2 i): OCTAVIA HILL'S FELLOW WORKERS

Abbreviations: COS-Charity Organization Society; EC-Ecclesiastical Commissioners; NUWW-National Union of Women Workers; OH-Octavia Hill; WUS-Women's University Settlement

1. **Miss Joan Agnew**
Cousin of John Ruskin recorded as collecting rents with Octavia in 1865 at Paradise Place.

2. **Mrs Allen**
Became OH's assistant in 1876.

3. **Miss Argles**
1889-91 headworker and housing worker at the WUS. Graduate of Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford. Member of the Red Cross Hall Society, COS, Metropolitan Association for Befriending Young Servants, Invalid Children Aid Society

4. **Mrs Henrietta Barnett nee Rowland** (1851-1936)
Began working for OH in 1869 at the age of 17 as an unpaid volunteer. Worked at Barrett's Court and after her marriage to Samuel Barnett in 1873 moved to Whitechapel where they set up their own housing schemes. Among many public positions, member of Poor Law Schools Children's Departmental Committee, Poor Law Guardian, one of founder members of the COS, School Board manager, founder of Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust, Vice-president of NUWW, Vice-president of National Association for the Welfare of the Feeble-minded, President of the International Conference of Settlements, Hon President of the International Conference on Settlements. Created CBE 1917, DBE 1924.
Publications include: The Work of District Visitors, 1881; The Making of the Home, 1895; Canon Barnett: his life, work and friends, 1918

5. **Miss Bartlett** (1873-1922)
Housing worker resident at the WUS from May 1889. Graduate of Girton College, Cambridge. Described as 'one of Miss Hill's central workers', who 'looked after property in Southwark with Miss Bowen'. Theosophist who accompanied Anne Besant to India, leading member of the Howard League for Penal Reform.

6. **Mrs Blyth**
Mentioned as one of the earliest housing workers.

7. **Mrs Eva Bowen nee Boord**
Trained and worked with OH 1893-1900, looking after property in Southwark with Miss Bartlett, then emigrated to New Zealand.

8. **Miss Alice Busk**
Mentioned as a housing worker by Henrietta Barnett. Elected as a vestrywomen in one of London's poorest parishes, St George's Southwark.
Publications: 'Women's Work on vestries and Councils' in Rev J Hand, (ed), Good Citizenship, London, 1899.

9. **Miss Augustus Butcher**
Housing worker for the Barnetts in the East London Dwellings Improvement Company.

10. **Miss Ellen Chase**
American, worked with OH in Deptford for 6 years from 1886 to 1982 before returning to Boston and carrying 'out the same principles in the management of houses in her own country'.
Publications; Tenant Friends in Deptford, 1928

11. **Miss Mary Clover** (1876-1965)
Collected rents for OH while resident at WUS, 1898-1902. Graduate of Girton College 1895-98, Secretary of Girton 1903-33

12. **Miss Olive Cockerell** (d.1910)
OH's god-daughter, possibly the daughter of her friend Sydney Cockerell. Recorded as helping OH with the housing work in the early 1900s.

13. **Alice Collingwood**
Former pupil of the school run by OH, her mother and sisters. Mentioned in a letter of 1868 as helping with housing work at Paradise Place and Freshwater Place.

14. **Miss Emma Cons** (1838-1912)
Life-long friend of OH's, helped with rent collection and supervision at Paradise Place, Freshwater Place and Barret's Court. Became the first paid housing manager at Drury Lane in 1876 and also ran a working girls' home there. In 1879 took charge of Surrey Buildings, a block of model dwellings built for South London Dwellings Company and lived in the scheme with her two sisters. Among many positions: founder and honorary manager of the Old Vic as a temperance theatre, 1884-97, founder of Morley College for Working Men and Women; founding member of the Coffee Tavern movement, founding member of Swanley Horticultural School for Women; first woman alderman on LCC, nominated for her housing and social work, member of the LCC School Board, Executive member of the Liberal Women's Federation, Vice-President of London Society for Women's Suffrage. 1896 went to Turkey to report on the Armenian atrocities.

15. **Miss Ellen Cons**
Lived in at Surrey Buildings with Emma and assisted her with her work.

16. **Miss Covington**
Recorded in a letter of 1895 as working in the new cottages at Westminster, and helping on the South side of river.

17. **Miss Cowie**
Recorded as helping at Freshwater Place

18. **Miss Dicken**
Worked on EC estates in the Notting Hill area, 1899 became manager of the Improved Tenants' Association.

19. **Miss Stella Duckworth** (d.1897)
Described as both a worker and a benefactor of OH's housing work. OH paid her a tribute in Letter to Fellow Workers of 1897: 'The other new buildings just being finished are 6 more cottages. [near Lisson Grove]. They were undertaken by Miss Duckworth, who has worked with us so devotedly.....who has taken up as an inheritance her mothers's help to our donation fund'. Daughter of Leslie Stephen's second wife, Julia Duckworth.

20. **Miss Cicely Egles** (1892-1974)
Came to train with OH in 1910 at the age of 18, and lived in with her.

21. **Hannah Fox**
American, worked for OH in 1880s and carried on housing work in Philadelphia on her return.

22. **Miss Maud Galton**
Managed a group of properties in Southwark, owned by Lady Selborne, and in 1901 took charge of estates in the Old Kent Rd belonging to the ECs. On OH's death took responsibility for district called 'mixed Southwark', an assortment of private property and property owned by Trusts. During the First World War worked in Barrow managing munition housing, and from

1929 for the Chelsea Housing Improvement Society. Member of Sub-committee of Women's Section of the Garden Cities Town Planning Association and of Association of Women House Property Managers.

23. **Miss Agnes Galton**
Sister of Maud, also active in housing work.

24. **Miss Gee**
Recorded as working in Green Street, Deptford in 1893, and in 1895 as having been put in charge of some 'dreadfully managed blocks close to Mrs Blyth's'.

25. **Mrs Godwin**
Helped Emily Hill in Freshwater Place in the 1860s when OH was ill, and recorded at Barretts Court as an 'old fellow worker specially connected with the court itself'. Member of the COS. Sister-in-law of George MacDonald, an old family friend of Octavia.

26. **Miss Joan Gruner** (1848-1936)
Founder and first warden of the WUS, 1887-99, graduate of Girton College, 1874-77. Acted as house property manager for group of 30 houses for OH.

27. **Miss Elizabeth Haldane** (1862-1937)
Came to work with OH in 1884, and on her return to Scotland helped set up the Edinburgh Social Union. Among many public positions served on the Interdepartmental Committee on Outdoor Staff appointed under the National Insurance Act of 1911 and the MacDonnell Royal Commission on the Civil Service in 1913; originated Voluntary Aid Detachments in 1909, which became the Army Nursing Service in the First World War; governor of Birkbeck college; member of Scottish Universities Committee and General Nursing Council; appointed the first woman trustee of Carnegie Trust; first Scottish women JP; 1918 became Companion of Honour.
Publications: From one century to another: reminiscences of Elizabeth S Haldane, 1937

28. **Miss Hammond**
Resident of WUS, described in 1890 as acting as substitute to Miss Argles, head-worker and rent collector. Graduate of Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford.

29. **Mrs Alice Hart**
Honorary Secretary and treasurer of the Barrett's Court Women and Girls' Institute. Sister of Henrietta Barnett.

30. **Miss Mary Harrison**
Described as an old fellow worker especially connected with Barrett's Court. Niece of Mary Howitt and close friend of OH.

31. **Miss Amy Hayne**
In 1899 set up the Improved Tenants Association to be run along Octavia Hill lines. Cousin of Reginald Rowe.

32. **Mrs Emily Southwood Maurice nee Hill** (b.1840)
OH's sister, helped in the housing work. Hon secretary of the Kyrle Society. Married Edmund Maurice, 1872.

33. **Miss Florence Hill** (b.1843)
OH's sister, helped in the housing work. In 1860s went to went to Darmstadt at request of Princess Alice to help in organization of work on Octavia Hill lines.

34. **Mrs Gertrude Lewes nee Hill** (b.1837)
OH's sister, helped in the housing work. Member of the COS. Married Charles Lewes, stepson of George Eliot, in 1865.

35. **Miss Miranda Hill** (1836-1910)
OH's sister and mainstay, lived with Octavia for most of their adult lives. Head of Nottingham Place School, founder of the Kyrle Society and Poor Law Guardian.

36. **Miss Anna Hogg**
Co-worker of Ellen Chase at Green Street in Deptford in the 1880s. Came from Dublin, and lived in at Nottingham Place with OH.

37. **Miss Maud M Jeffery**
Joined OH in 1907 as her secretary and worked on the EC Estates. During the First World War managed Cumberland Market, a Crown Estate Commissioners' housing estate. Member of the Women's Housing Sub-committee set up by the Ministry of Reconstruction. Founded the Octavia Hill Club in 1928. Received the OBE in 1938.
Publications: Maud Jeffery & Edith Neville, House Property and Management, 1921 and Maud Jeffery, House Property and its Management on Octavia Hill lines, 1929

38. **Miss Janet Johnson** (1858-1955)
Lived in with OH at Nottingham Place, and became one of trustees of the Horace Street houses along with OH and Lord Wolmer. In 1888 became the first woman Poor Law Guardian in Southwark. National Trust trustee in succession to Octavia. Member of the WUS and founder of the Boys Aid Association.

39. **Miss Kennedy**
Housing worker at Barrett's Court in the 1870s. Came from Dublin and on her return set up a housing scheme in her father's property in Dublin, which she ran along Octavia Hill lines.

40. **Fro Lagerstadt**
Swedish worker who came to train with OH in the 1880s and carried on with the work in Sweden. Became a friend and attended OH's funeral in 1912.

41. **Miss Larke**
Mentioned as involved in housing work with OH in 1912.

42. **Miss Leahy**
Mentioned by Margaret Wynne Nevinson as a fellow housing worker for Henrietta and Samuel Barnett in the East London Dwellings Improvement Company.

43. **Mrs Huddy nee Lee**
Mentioned as a worker in Barrets Court, 1877.

44. **Miss Leighton**
Mentioned as a worker in Barrett's Court, 1879/80.

45. **Miss Lidderdale**
Mentioned as having trained under OH, and going on to work on voluntary basis for Birmingham COPEC (Conference on Christian Politics, Economics and Citizenship).

46. **Miss Sophia Lonsdale** (1854-1930?)
Housing worker at Surrey Buildings with Emma Cons in 1884. Cousin of Emma's secretary, Caroline Martineau. Came from Lichfield where she was a Poor Law Guardian 1888?-1907, member of the Committee of a Rescue Home and one of founders of Lichfield High School for Girls. Chairwoman of Paddington COS and member of the Administrative Central Committee

of the COS; member of Girls' Diocesan Association, member of NUWW and of the Executive Committee of the Women's National Anti-Suffrage League.

47. **Mrs Lord**
Housing worker in Green Street, Deptford, 1880s/90s.

48. **Miss Mary Lumsden** (1874-1931)
1903 appointed agent by the ECs for the Walworth Estate in South London, on the recommendation of OH. In 1917 went to Dudley to manage munitions workers' housing and subsequently given an advisory post in the Ministry of Munitions where she devised a training scheme to ensure continuation of women housing managers for Munitions estates. Graduate of Girton College, 1893-97, member of the National Trust.
Publications: Octavia Hill and the Housing Problem, Edinburgh Review, April 1913

49. **Miss Maas**
Dutch worker, came to train with OH in the 1890s.

50. **Miss Mackintosh**
Mentioned as being funded through training with Octavia in 1907.

51. **Hon Mrs MacLagan**
Began work at Barrett's Court in 1871 looking after 7 houses funded by Mrs Stopford-Brooke.

52. **Miss Martin**
1875 came from Leeds to stay with OH and learn the work in order to work in a housing scheme being set up in Leeds.

53. **Miss Caroline Martineau** (1840-1902)
Worked with Emma Cons as her hon sec in Surrey Buildings.
Benefactor and first principal of Morley College, bequeathed its physics laboratory.

54. **Miss Cosette Maurice**
Working in Notting Hill with OH and Miss Yorke. c.1911. Grand-daughter of F D Maurice.

55. **Mrs Mayne**
1869 mentioned as the superintendent of an unspecified court

56. **Miss Mitchell**
Worked on EC estates in Southwark.

57. **Mrs Eva Mclaren nee Muller**
Mentioned as a housing worker with OH. Poor Law guardian for Lambeth, founder of Womens Liberal Federation.

58. **Miss Neilson**
1895 mentioned as helping Miss Tait with properties near Lambeth Palace.

59. **Miss Edith Neville** (1874-1951)
Housing worker, chairwoman of St Pancras Housing Association for 14 years, worked at the Mary Ward Settlement, hon.sec of the Peoples' Theatre, graduate of Newnham College. Awarded the OBE 1937.
Publications: M Jeffrey and E Neville, House Property and its Management, 1921

60. **Mrs Margaret Wynne Nevinson**
Housing worker with Henrietta and Samuel Barnett in the East End. Married to journalist Henry Nevinson and lived with him at Toynbee Hall where they both taught. Member of the Women's Social and Political Union, then the Women's Freedom League. Served for 25 years on

Education Committees under School Boards and the LCC, appointed Poor Law guardian, Hampstead, 1904-22, appointed JP 1920, first woman to sit on Criminal Bench in County of London, 1921 went to USA to study Probation system in Law Courts. Author, playwright and journalist, 1927 elected to Council of Institute of Women Journalists 1928 Vice President of Women's Peace Crusade.
Publications include: Life's fitful fever: a volume of memoirs, 1926,
Five years Struggle for Freedom 1908-1912, WFL, 1912

61. **Mrs Elinor Southwood Ouvry nee Lewes** (b.1877)
OH's niece, daughter of her sister Gertrude. Trained for housing management with her and acted as her secretary from 1900. Trustee and member of the Octavia Hill Housing Association for 67 years retiring in 1967 aged 90. Edited Octavia Hill's Letters on Housing, 1933

62. **Helen Parrish**
American, lived and worked with OH for 6 months in 1880s, and with Hannah Fox carried on with housing work in Philadelphia.

63. **Miss Marion Paterson**
Housing worker with the Barnetts in the East End.

64. **Miss Paul**
Put in charge of the accounts at Deptford, but broke down and left.

65. **Miss Pearson**
Together with Miss Simm, lived in OH's household for many years. Did accounts, but was not actively involved in the housing work.

66. **Miss Perrin**
Worked on EC estates in Notting Hill area.

67. **Miss Perry**
Worked with OH in 1900s and went on to work for St Pancras House Improvement Society.

68. **Miss Sophia Peters**
Became OH's assistant 1873/4. Married Charles Loch, secretary of the COS.

69. **Miss Beatrice Potter/Mrs Webb** (1858-1943)
1884-6 took over sister Katherine's work in the Barnett's housing schemes. 1883 joined Soho Committee of COS. Researcher for Charles Booth, and among many public positions member of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws 1905-9, and six governmental committees, appointed JP 1919. Married Sydney Webb 1892, co-founders of the Fabian Society, the New Statesman, London School of Economics. Vice-president of the NUWW.
Publications include: My apprenticeship, 1926

70. **Miss Katherine Potter/Lady Courtney**
Elder sister of Beatrice Potter. October 1875 came to live and work with OH, acting as her secretary; transferred to the Barnetts in 1876 where she managed several courts. Katherine Buildings was named after her. Member of the Westminster COS. Married Leonard Courtney MP in 1883.

71. **Miss Theresa Potter**
One of the Potter sisters, also worked for the Barnetts in the 1880s.

72. **Miss Ella Pycroft**
Housing worker with East London Dwelling Company, managed by Barnetts. Worked alongside Beatrice Potter and became a life-long friend. Later became Director of Domestic Economy education for the LCC.

73. **Mrs Jane Nassau Senior nee Hughes** (d.1877)
Close friend of OH's, did the accounts for the early housing schemes. 1874 founded Metropolitan Association for Befriending Young Servants, one of founders of GFS, 1873 appointed the first woman Poor Law inspector, member of National Society for Women's Suffrage.

74. **Miss Mary Sheepshanks** (1872-1958)
Resident at WUS where work included collecting rents, graduate of Newnham College, Cambridge. 1897 joined the staff at Morley College where she became vice-principal.

75. **Miss Rachel Sim**
Together with Miss Pearson, lived with OH and her family from at least 1890 until Octavia's death in 1912. Unclear the extent to which she was involved in housing work.

76. **Miss Smith**
One of the early workers at Barrett's Court in the 1870s.

77. **Miss Elizabeth Sturge** (b.1849?)
Came to work with OH in 1886 aged 37 and worked in a housing scheme at Westminster for 18 months. Lived in at Nottingham Place with Octavia. Involved in the building of a small garden suburb near Bristol which had to be abandoned at the outbreak of the First World War. Came from a noted Bristol philanthropic family and she and her sisters were all active in the constitutional women's suffrage movement. Poor Law guardian and member of the COS.
Publications: E.Sturge, Reminiscences of my life, 1928

78. **Miss Joan Sunderland**
1901 began work on the EC estates in Lambeth. Appointed munitions housing manager in Barrow in 1917.

79. **Miss Joanna ter Meulen**
Dutch worker, trained for housing management with OH in 1893 prior to taking up the work in Holland. Placed in Green Street, Deptford.

80. **Miss Annie Townshend**
Housing worker with the Barnetts, shared lodgings with Kate Potter.

81. **Miss Jane Upcott** (1888-1985)
Began housing work for OH in 1910 aged 22. Graduate of Somerville. 1917 went to Dudley as a munitions housing manager as Miss Lumsden's deputy. After war work joined Miss Jeffrey at the Cumberland Market Estate, and in 1927 was appointed as Property Manager to Chesterfield Town Council. According to Gillian Darley she was the first women municipal housing manager. 1928 founded Conference of Women Municipal Managers. Played a central role in the National Trust after OH's death, taking her place on Finance and General Purposes Committee, becoming Honorary Adviser on Housing, and member of the Estates Committee on which she remained for 56 years.
Publications: Women House Property Managers, 1924

82. **Miss Wilson**
Mentioned as a volunteer worker in 1875.

83. **Miss Harriot Yorke** (1843-1930)
Became OH's companion in 1879. Managed buildings in Marylebone 1889, Barrett's Court, built a house in Nelson Square to add to WUS residents' houses. Stayed on in OH's house after her death and formed a centre for fellow workers and carried on with the work. Treasurer of the National Trust for many years.

ii) ANALYSIS

Number of women housing workers identified: 83

Worked with Octavia Hill: 70; Henrietta Barnett: 9; Emma Cons: 4

Overseas workers: 6

Marital status: single 64; married: 16; not known: 3

Lived with OH (10) - Miss Cicely Egles; Miss Anna Hogg; Miss Martin; Helen Parrish; Miss Pearson; Miss Simm; Miss Elizabeth Sturge; Miss Janet Johnson; Miss Katherine Potter; Miss Harriot Yorke

Biographies/memoirs (8) Miss Ellen Chase; Miss Emma Cons; Miss Elizabeth Haldane; Miss Sophia Lonsdale; Mrs Margaret Wynne Nevinson; Miss Beatrice Potter/Webb; Mrs Henrietta Barnett; Miss Elizabeth Sturge

Sources include: Octavia Hill's volumes of letters: memoirs of workers listed above; E Moberley Bell, Octavia Hill: a biography, 1942; M Brion, Women in the housing service, 1995; D M Brodie, The Women's University Settlement, 1887-1937, WUS, nd; Gillian Darley, Octavia Hill: a life, 1990; William Thompson Hill, Octavia Hill: pioneer of the National Trust and housing reformer, 1956; Girton College Register; Girton Review; Olive Banks, The biographical dictionary of British feminists, Vol.I, 1800-1930, 1985, Vol 2, 1900-45, 1990; Dictionary of National Biography; Who Was Who; Octavia Hill Birthplace Museum Trust, Girton College Register, Girton Review, Europa biographical dictionary of British Women, 1983

APPENDIX 3: OCTAVIA HILL'S BENEFACTORS

1. **Mrs Stopford Brooke**
Owned property in Barrett's Court, active in the Girls' Friendly Society.

2. **Mrs Scrase Dickins**
Bought 3 small freehold houses in Horace Street in 1886 and donated them to the Horace Street Trust.

3. **Ladie Julia Ducie** (d.1895)
Both benefactor and worker, described by OH as 'one of my oldest friends and one who helped when the work was small and out of sight'. Owned property in Barrett's Court and supervised it herself, and left the building to OH. In 1887 undertook the cost of laying out Red Cross Garden in Southwark.

4. **Mrs Julia Duckworth/Stephen** (d.1895)
OH mentioned her in 1869 as one of her 'newer friends'. A great supporter of her work. Second wife of Sir Leslie Stephen and the mother of Virginia Woolf.

5. **Lady Jane Dundas**
1887 lent money to OH to secure the Red Cross Hall in Southwark, and in 1888 made a donation for the building of 6 cottages in the Red Cross scheme.

6. **George Eliot** (1819-1880)
Gave money to various of OH's schemes and in 1874 donated £200 to the fund set up by her supporters to free her from the necessity of undertaking paid work. Stepmother of Charles Lewes who was married to OH's sister Gertrude.

7. **Mrs Russell Gurney** (1823-93)
Left OH Westbourne Buildings, Paddington, a block of model dwellings, in her will. Member of Married Women's Property Committee. Cousin of Caroline Stephen.

8. **Sophia Jex-Blake** (1840-1912)
Intimate friend of OH's in the early 1860s. Gave money to her housing schemes over the years and left her money in her will. Founded the Edinburgh and London Schools of Medicine for Women.

9. **Miss Louisa Marshall**
Made a gift to OH for the purchase of houses in 1913.

10. **Lady Nicholson**
Donated painted panels for the Red Cross Men's Club in 1889.

11. **Lord and Lady Pembroke**
Purchased 15 houses in St Judes, Whitechapel in 1876, and paid for a worker there.

12. **Lady Frederick Pollock**
1898 together with C S Loch co-ordinated the group of OH's friends and supporters who commissioned the John Sargent portrait. Entertained groups of tenants at her home.

13. **Mrs Rix**
Friend of OH who, together with Mrs Schuster, recorded as completing 5 more cottages in Lisson Grove in 1896.

14. **John Ruskin** (1819-1900)
OH's early mentor and patron, who funded her first housing schemes in the 1860s.

15. **Mrs Schuster** - See entry for Mrs Rix.

16. **Miss Paula Schuster**
Daughter of Mrs Schuster, in 1907 offered to buy a group of houses in Notting Hill and provided funding (on request from OH) to fund Miss Mackintosh through period of training.

17. **Lady Maud Selborne** (1858-1950)
Both benefactor and worker involved in schemes in Deptford and Southwark. Became one of 3 vice-presidents of Women Housing Managers Association. President of Conservative and Unionists Women's Franchise League, member of the Central Committee of the GFS. Daughter of Lord Salisbury, Conservative Prime Minister.

18. **William Shaen** (1820-87)
OH's solicitor, he helped with the law business relating to all her early housing schemes, and he and his wife Emily were personal friends of OH. In 1874 he organized the fund to free her from her paid work, and in 1881, when Ruskin sold the properties which OH managed for him, he bought Freshwater Place for her. President of the National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Act.

19. **Lady Stanley**
1870 recorded as making a contribution for the buildings - presumably Barrett's Court.

20. **Caroline Stephen** (1834-1909)
1877 funded a block of artisan dwellings, Hereford Dwellings, in Chelsea. Sister of Sir Lesley Stephen.

21. **Miss Julia Sterling**
Director of the women's classes at Queen's College where OH worked in the 1860s. In 1872 she bought Walmer Street and Walmer Place, 38 houses which Emma Cons managed.

22. **Miss Tait**
1895 recorded as building 3 cottages on a small bit of freehold ground near Lambeth Palace, and owning the lease of a nearby court. Possibly the daughter of Archibald Tait, Archbishop of Canterbury 1868-82

Sources: see those listed for Appendix 2

APPENDIX 4: PUBLIC POSITIONS ACHIEVED BY HOUSING WORKERS

Poor Law Guardian (7)
Mrs Henrietta Barnett
Miss Miranda Hill
Miss Janet Johnson
Miss Sophia Lonsdale
Mrs McLaren/nee Muller
Mrs Margaret Wynne Nevinson
Miss Elizabeth Sturge

Justice of the Peace (3)
Miss Elizabeth Haldane
Mrs Margaret Wynne Nevinson
Mrs Beatrice Webb nee Potter

School Board Member (3)
Mrs Henrietta Barnett
Miss Emma Cons
Mrs Margaret Wynne Nevinson

Local Government (2)
Miss Alice Busk
Miss Emma Cons

Member of a Government Committee (3)
Miss Elizabeth Haldane
Mrs Beatrice Webb
Mrs Henrietta Barnett

Member of Charity Organization Society (10)
Miss Argles
Mrs Henrietta Barnett
Miss Emma Cons
Mrs Godwin
Miss Miranda Hill
Mrs Gertrude Lewes nee Hill
Miss Sophia Lonsdale
Miss Beatrice Potter/Webb
Miss Katherine Potter
Miss Elizabeth Sturge

Women's University Settlement (7)
Miss Argles
Miss Bartlett
Miss Mary Clover
Miss Joan Gruner
Miss Hammond
Miss Janet Johnson
Miss Mary Sheepshanks

Public Honours
Mrs Henrietta Barnett - CBE, DBE
Miss Elizabeth Haldane - Companion of Honour
Miss Maud Jeffery - OBE
Miss Edith Neville - OBE

Sources: see those listed for Appendix 2

APPENDIX 5: FEMALE POPULATION BY MARITAL STATUS AND AGE, 1861 & 1911

	1861	1911
Married	3,488,952	6,630,284
Unmarried	6,044,296	10,629,796
Widowed	756,717	1,364,804
Total (all ages)	**10,289,965**	**18,624,884**

Sources: Census of England & Wales, 1861, LIII, Part I, Table 4, p.19
Census of England & Wales, 1911, Vol. XXXV, 1917-18, p.151

APPENDIX 6: MAJOR CATEGORIES OF WOMEN'S HOUSING 1861 & 1911

1861		1911	
AT HOME (not returned as occupied)		AT HOME (females aged 10+ classified as unoccupied)	
Wives	3,488,952	Wives	6,630,284
Widows	269,142	Widows	953,793
Female relatives	2,363,087	Unmarried female relatives	3,122,493
Gentlewomen annuitants	87,429	Women of private means	295,712
Total	**6,208,610**	**Total**	**11,002,282**
AT HOME OR IN LODGINGS		AT HOME OR IN LODGINGS	
Textile manufacture	502,644	Textile manufacture	656,336
Other trades	1,289,739	Other trades	2,210,534
Total	**1,792,383**	**Total**	**2,866,870**
LIVING-IN		LIVING-IN	
Domestic servants	976,911	Domestic servants	1,335,358
Farm servants (indoor)	46,561	Milliners/dress-makers	405,818
Governesses	24,770		
Milliners/dress-makers	286,298		
Total	**1,334,560**	**Total**	**1,741,176**
INSTITUTIONS (as inmates)		INSTITUTIONS (as inmates)	
Workhouse	63,402	Workhouse	103,054
Lunatic asylum	13,096	Lunatic asylum	57,608
Prison	4,919	Prison	2,893
		Others	22,536
Total	**81,417**	**Total**	**212,012**
OTHER CATEGORIES		OTHER CATEGORIES	
Vagrants, beggars & others of no stated occupation	158,120	Enumerated in barns, sheds caravans etc. or in the open air	10,694
Enumerated in barges, barns, tents & other vessels	75,188		
Total	**233,308**		**10,694**

SOURCES: Census of England & Wales, 1861, LIII, Pt I, 1863, pp. 33, 34, 36, 39, 66, 67, 68, 70.

SOURCES: Census of England & Wales 1911 Vol. XXXV, 1917-18, pp.72, 106, 129, 131, 132, 136, 146, 196.

APPENDIX 7: LIVING-IN OCCUPATIONS BY AGE, 1861

Age group	No. of females in age group	Unmarried females	Domestic service	Millinery/ dress-making	Total
0-4	1,349,561	_	_	_	_
5-9	1,174,316	_	1,743	38	1,781
10-14	1,048,152	__	84,908	5,721	90,629
15-19	977,384	944,714	294,763	57,118	351,881
20-39	3,172,179	1,229,051	458,548	172,229	876,099
40-59	1,794,871	223,205	97,845	43,134	140,979
60-79	735,525	78,618	36,864	7,336	44,200
80-99	66,024	6,440	1,648	292	1,940
100+	146	20	11	-	11

SOURCES: Census of England & Wales, 1861, LIII, Part I, 1863, Table XX, occupations of females at different periods of age, p.LViii Table 55, Age of the populations, p.107, age of spinsters p.21.

APPENDIX 8: LIVING-IN OCCUPATIONS BY AGE, 1911

Age group	No. of females in age group	Unmarried females	Widowed	Domestic service	Millinery/ dress-making	Total
10-14	1,752,057	_	_	40,281	14,747	55,028
15-19	1,681,726	1,661,526	89	377,403	115,732	493,135
20-24	1,673,066	1,266,518	2,487	341,818	90,471	432,289
25-34	3,124,580	1,110,310	40,868	298,576	85.615	384,191
35-44	2,509,373	492,588	126,938	134,149	47,262	181,411
45-54	1,833,936	289,381	244,577	82,593	29,389	111,982
55-64	1,213,229	160,147	344,733	42,952	15,463	58,415
65-74	757,603	91,779	281,517	15,447	6,138	21,585
75+	311,543	37,759	223,595	2,139	1,001	3,140

SOURCES: Census of England & Wales, 1911, Vol XXXV, 1917-18, Table XX, p.71. Table 6 p.266.

APPENDIX 9: Classes of work and average wages of female domestic servants at selected age periods, 1899

	AGE	ANNUAL WAGE
Between maid	19	10.7s
Scullery maid	19	13.0s
Kitchen maid	20	15.0s
Nurse house-maid	21-24	16.0s
General	21-24	14.6s
House-maid	21-24	16.2s
Nurse	25-29	20.1s
Parlour maid	25-29	20.6s
Laundry maid	25-29	20.1s
Cook	25-29	20.2s
Lady's maid	30-34	24.7s
Cook-housekeeper	40+	35.6s
House-keeper	40+	45.0s

Source: Clara Collet, Report on the money wages of indoor domestic servants, 1899, XCII I, p.21

APPENDIX 10: GFS ACCOMMODATION LODGES 1913

A = teachers & professionals; B = business; C = domestic servants;
D = factory workers; E = low paid workers; F = migratory women

Lodge	Class accommodated	Lodging	Board & Lodging	Number of beds
<u>London</u>				
Chelsea	ABC	1s 3d-5s (8d per night)	-	15
Deptford	ABC	2s - 5s per week	-	6
Ealing	AB	-	10s 6d - 24s 6d	14
Islington	BC	6d-2s per night 5d-7d per night	10s 6d - 14s	16
Kensington	BCD	2s 6d - 5s per week	-	21
Lambeth	AB	2s 6d - 7s bd	10s 6d	13
Paddington	ABC	10d - 2s bd	10s 6d - £1.2s	11
Southwark	ABC	2s 6d - 7s bd	10s 6d upwards	10
Westminster (Berkley Square)	AB	-	11s 6 d - 31s 6d	25
Westminster (Frances Street)	AB	8s	-	79
<u>South of England</u>				
Bath	ABC	-	8s - £1.10s	12
Bournemouth	ABC	-	10d - 2s a night	21
Bristol	ABCDE	-	8s - 15s	12-14
Cambridge	ABC	-	12s 6d - 15s	15
Croydon	ABCD	1s - 2s per week	10s - £1.5s	19
Exeter	ABC	-	7s 6d - £1.5s	13
Falmouth	ABC	-	8s 6d - 15s	12
Folkestone	AB	-	£1.5s	22
Gloucester	ABC	6d a night	8s upwards	12
Leamington	AB	-	9s - 25s	11
Norwich	AB	-	10s 3d - 12s 3d	16
Oxford	ABC	6d a night	9s - £1.7s	15
Plymouth	ABC	-	8s 6d - 15s	15
Portsmouth	C	-	8s 6d upwards	8
Ramsgate	ABC	-	10s 6d - 15s upwards	-
Reading	ABC	-	8s 6d & upwards	5
Salisbury	ABC	-	10s - £1.5s	7
Southampton	BC	3d & 4d a night	8s 6d - £1.5s	8
Southsea	No information given		-	-
Weymouth	ABC	-	10s upwards	23
Worcester	AB	-	8s - 10s	10
Yarmouth	AB	-	12s 6d - £1.5s	40

Lodge	Class accommodated	Lodging	Board & Lodging	Number of beds
North of England				
Birmingham	ABC	-	12s 6d	50
Bradford	ABC	-	8s 6d - £1.1s	22
Carlise	ABC	-	from 3s	3
Chester	AB	3d - 2s 6d a night	8s 6d - £1.5s	14
Derby	AB no further information given			
Halifax	ABCD	2s 6d - 3s 6d	8s (board only)	6
Hull	ABC	1s - 1s 3d	8s - 12s	9
Leeds	ABCD	6d a night	10s - 30s	21
Liverpool	ABCD	-	10s - £1.5s	13
Newcastle on Tyne	ABC	6d - 9d per night	10s 6d - 12s 6d	17
Nottingham	D	from 1s 3d B&B	8s 9d - 9s 9d	22
Preston	AB	-	8s - 15s	13
Scarborough	ABC	-	10s - £1.5s	29
Sheffield	ABC	-	9s - £1.5s	23
Southport	AB	-	10s 6d upwards	35
Walsall	AB	-	8s 6d - 10s 6d	7
York	ABCD	-	8s - 9s	6
Wales				
Cardiff	AB	-	12s - £1	17
Llandudno	ABCD	-	10s 6d - £1.5s	36
Newport (Mons)	AB	-	10s 6d upwards	9
Port Talbot	-	5s 6d p.w.	8s 6d - 10s 6d	9

Source: Revised Handbook of Lodging Homes for Women & Girls contained in the annual report of the National Association of Women's Lodging Homes for 1913

APPENDIX 11: COST OF BEDS ON COMMON LODGING HOUSES AND SHELTERS IN LONDON 1906.

	Single Men	Single Women	Married Couples
Free	921	177	-
For labour	585	-	-
2d	838	276	-
3d	358	-	-
4d	3,755	-	-
5d	9,921	127	-
6d	8,905	1,230	-
7d	19	168	-
8d	33	139	-
9d	69	150	16
1s	39	91	383

Source: DCV, Appendix IX Common lodging houses and vagrancy in London, Table IV, p.502

APPENDIX 12: LCC CENSUSES OF HOMELESS PEOPLE, 1904-1913

	In Streets or sitting up in shelters		Occupying Free Beds		In Labour Homes		In Casual Wards	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
29.1.04	1563	184	-	-	1034	-	1034	175
17.2.05	1869	312	-	-	-	-	926	210
8.2.07	1998	402	-	-	-	-	-	-
15.1.09	1895	170	572	193	1238	206	1001	184
18.2.10	2510	220	899	273	1405	194	928	173
17.2.11	1462	321	804	193	1321	186	962	129
*9.2.12	978	213	684	240	1196	225	900	132
14.2.13	522	127	653	212	1097	67	493	52

* Embankment scheme came into operation in 1912

Source: Report of Metropolitan Poor Law Inspectors Advisory Committee on the Homeless Poor 1914 Cd 7307 XIIV p.9

APPENDIX 13: DEATHS (FEMALE) FROM STARVATION IN LONDON 1884

Occupation	Age	Comment
Needlewoman	54	found dying in street
Wife of inmate of workhouse	49	
-	66	found dying in street
-	62	
Dress-maker	69	
Widow/tailoress	60	
-	56	found in street
Packing case maker	34	
Hawker	36	
Charwoman	51	
Widow of police constable	56	
-	58	
-	63	found in street
Widow of cigar maker	35	
Sempstress	63	
Charwomen	60	
-	76	
Laundress	24	

Source: Vagrants 1884 LXV11 845 Deaths from Starvation, Metropolis LXV11 77

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PARLIAMENTIARY PAPERS AND GOVERNMENT REPORTS

Reports made to the President of the Poor Law Board by Poor Law Inspectors 1866, XXXV

Vagrants, 1872, LI

Select Committee on Artisans' and Labourers' Dwellings Improvements, 1881, VII; 1882, VII

Eleventh annual report of the Local Government Board, c.3337, 1882

Paupers (England), 1884, LXVII

Royal Commission on the Housing of the Working Classes, 1884-5, Vols. I & II, XXX

Wages, textile trades, comparison of normal wages in 1886, 1889, c.5807

Pauperism (England and Wales), 1895, LXXXIV

The money wages of indoor domestic servants, 1899, XCII, I

Departmental Committee on Vagrancy, 1906, Vols.I-III, Cd.2852, 2891, 2892 ciii I

Truck Acts (Departmental Committee), 1908, Vols.I-III, Cd.4442-4

Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress, 1909, Cd 4499

Report of the Metropolitan Poor Law Inspectors Advisory Committee on the Homeless Poor, 1914, Cd.7307, xliv

Census of England and Wales for 1861, 1863, Vols.I-III, XXXV

Census of England and Wales for 1871, 1873, Vol.IV, General Report, lxxxi, Part II.

Census of England and Wales for 1911, 1912-13, Age and condition as to marriage; 1914-16, Summary Tables; 1917-18, General Report

OPCS Census of Great Britain, 1991, Household and family composition, 10%, HMSO, 1994.

Department of the Environment, Housing research report: outreach and resettlement work with people sleeping rough, 1995

Department of the Environment, Our future homes, (Government White paper), 1995

OCTAVIA HILL - primary sources

Collected essays:-

Hill, Octavia, The Homes of the London Poor, Frank Cass & Co.Ltd., 1970. (First published 1875).

Hill, Octavia, Our Common Land, Macmillan & Co., London, 1877.

Published volumes of letters:-

Maurice, C. Edmund (ed.), Life of Octavia Hill as told by her letters, Macmillan & Co., London, 1913.

Maurice, Emily Southwood (ed.), Octavia Hill, early ideals, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1928.

Ouvry, Elinor Southwood (ed.), Octavia Hill's Letters on Housing 1864-1911, The Adelphi Bookshop, London, 1933.

Other writings:-

Hill, Octavia, House Property and its Management: some papers on the methods of management introduced by Miss Octavia Hill and adapted to modern conditions, George Allen and Unwin, London, 1921.

Hill, Octavia, 'Influence of character' in Charles Booth, Life and Labour of the people in London, Vol II, Williams & Norgate, 1891.

GIRLS FRIENDLY SOCIETY - primary sources

Pamphlets:-

Addresses delivered on the Aims and Objects of the GFS by M E Townsend, H Cartwright, G M Roberts, M Thornton and Rev Lewis Clayton, Hatchards, 1884

Anon, The Need for the Girls Friendly Society, London, nd.

Anon, An Appeal to the Mistresses of Elementary Schools from the GFS, London, Hatchards, 1882

Grey, B C, Letters to Working Associates respecting members in Service, 1883

Hill, Joanna M., Practical suggestions for the Department for GFS candidates from Workhouses and Orphanages, Hatchards, London, 1884.

Lady Knightley, Hints on the work of the GFS in country parishes, 1883.

Lady Knightley, Thrift and help in sickness, Hatchards, London, 1884

Mason, M H, The Special Purpose of the GFS: read at a meeting in Nottingham, 1881, Hatchards, London, 1881(?)

Mercier Anne, (Head of dept for Domestic Economy and Industrial Training), no title, Hatchards, 1883.

Mason, M H, The Organization of the 'CWO' department of the GFS, Hatchards, London, nd.

Townsend, M E, The Girls' Friendly Society, Hatchards, 1876

Townsend, M E, Wanted: A place! a letter GFS members, December 1881

Townsend, M E, Friendly letters to young women in business, London, 1883(?)

Townsend, M E, A Friendly Letter to Fathers and Mothers about the GFS, Hatchards, 1883

Townsend, M E, A Friendly Letter to Hospital Nurses, 1885

Townsend, M E, Our girl workers, What can the GFS be to them? Hatchards, no date

Townsend, M E, The Girls Friendly Society and the Girls Schools of England, addressed to the headmistresses, Hatchards, no date

Townsend, M E, A Friendly Letter to Mistresses of Elementary Schools, Hatchards, no date (reprinted from 'Friendly Work').

Townsend, M E, A Friendly Letter to Pupil Teachers, no date

Townsend, M E, An appeal to the mistresses of elemtary schools from the GFS, 1882

Records held by the GFS:-

Agenda books: central council 1885-1938; executive committee 1907-24; various committees 1910-19; Central Lodges Fund sub-committee 1911-33; Committees of council 1913-33.

Brabazon Home: printed reports 1885-1905; minute books 1886-1954; log book 1910-28; accounts 1938-47.

Committees: literature, later publications, 1890-1938; deputation 1895-1920; special committee 1903-9; standing committee 1911-20; colonial 1896-1904.

Department of Registry Work 1903-20: Central employment office committee 1905-36; central needlework depot 1905-48.

Dioceses: record books, 1904-21.

GFS in Europe, Diocesan Council 1890-8, 1904-13.

Letter sent to Diocesan Presidents by E Caroline Stamer, Head of Members Department, 29 November 1906
Lodges and Lodging Department 1906-23; aid and reference committee 1913-17.

Minute books: Central Council 1875-9 including drafts of the constitution, 1880-1950; executive committee and sub-committee 1879-1954; general sub-committee 1880-1912; finance committee 1875-1948.

Unpublished memoirs:-

Townsend, M E, Memories of a life, nd

Townsend, M E, Some friends of the past, 1913

Townsend, Mary and Frederick, Sketches and impressions, 1901

Townend, Kathleen, Some memories of Mrs Townsend, 1923

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LODGING HOMES FOR WOMEN - primary sources

Pamphlets:-

Higgs, Mary, Rescue work in Oldham 1903-1904, Oldham, Scott, 1904

Higgs, Mary, A safe clean place to live, 1904

Higgs, Mary, Glimpses into the Abyss, P S King & Sons, 1906.

Higgs, Mary, How to Start a Women's Lodging Home, P S King & Sons, 1912.

Higgs, Mary and Hayward, Edward, Where shall she live? The homelessness of the woman worker, P S Kings and Sons, 1910.

Higgs, Mary and Hayward, E, Where shall she live? The answer, 1914

Higgs, Mary and Hayward, Edward, The Housing of the Woman Worker, 1915.

National Association for Women's Lodging Homes, Annual Reports 1911-15

Revised handbook of lodging homes for women and girls, 1913

British Institute for Social Service, Annual Reports, 1906-1923

Proceedings of the National Conference on Lodging House Accommodation for Women, 1911

Newspapers:-

Daily Despatch, 20 March 1937

Daily Herald, 20 March 1937

Manchester Guardian, 20 March 1937

Oldham Chronicle, 2 February 1924, 19 September 1936, 20 March 1937, 17 April 1937

Oldham Chronicle, Mary Higgs, Young Oldham, Newscutting from 1919

Oldham Weekly Chronicle, 24 July 1954

Oldham Standard, Mary Higgs, Stories of a noble life, woman pioneer in many movements, newscuttings from 1933

CONTEMPORARY PUBLICATIONS

Anon, Work about the five dials, Macmillan & Co., 1878

Anon, W T Stead: Sir Vigilante of the Strands, a knight errant of the 19th century, article reprinted from the Review of Reviews, no date

Atkinson, Mabel, The economic foundations of the women's movement: the two sections of the women's movement, Fabian Tract No.175, June 1914

Barnett, Edith A, A healthy home in one or two rooms, National Health Society, Allman & Son, London, no date

Barnett, Mrs S.A., The Making of a Home: a reading book of domestic economy for school and home use, Cassell & Co., 1885.

Barnett, Mrs S. A., Canon Barnett: his life, work and friends, John Murray 1921.

Barnett, Mrs S. A., Homes not habitations, Spottiswood, Ballantyne & Co., Ltd., n.d

Barnett Mrs S. A., 'The beginnings of Toynbee Hall', in Practicable socialism, by Canon Barnett and Mrs Barnett, Longmans, Green & Co., 1915.

Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management, London, Chancellor Press, 1861.

Blackburn, Helen J, A Handbook for women engaged in social and political work, 1895.

Booth, Charles, Life and labour of the people of London, 3rd edition, Macmillan, 1902-3, 17 volumes.

Booth, W., In Darkest England and the Way Out, Charles Knight & Co Ltd., London, 1970 (first published by the Salvation Army 1890)

Bosanquet, Helen, Social Work in London 1869-1912, Harvester Press Ltd., 1973. (first published 1914).

Boyd R W, The ABC of a healthy house, being hints to households, Simpkin, Marshall & Co, London, nd

Brocklehurst, Rev T, The economics of hell, reprinted from *The Spectator*, 1912

Burdett-Coutts, Angela, (ed.), A series of congress papers on the philanthropic work of women by eminent writers, Sampson, Low, Marston & Co., 1893

Butler C. V., Social conditions in Oxford, Sidgwick & Jackson, 1912.

Butler Josephine, Women's work and culture, Macmillan & Co., 1869

Charity Organization Society, The best means of dealing with exceptional distress, Cassel & Co, 1886

Chesterton, Mrs Cecil, In darkest London, Stanley Paul & Co., 1926

Cobbe, Frances Power, 'Idiots, women and minors. Is the classification sound? A discussion on the laws concerning the property of married women', reprinted from Fraser's Magazine, December 1868, Manchester, 1869

Cobbe, Frances Power, 'Wife torture in England' in the Contemporary Review, April 1876.

Davies, W H, The autobiography of a super tramp, Jonathan Cape, 1929 (first published 1908)

Engels, F., The housing question, Progress Publishers Ltd, (Moscow), 1975

Engels, F., The conditions of the working class in England, Panther Books Ltd, St Albans, 1976

Fison, Mrs William, The secret of a healthy home, Jarnold & Sons, London, nd

Gissing, G., The odd women, Anthony Blond Ltd., 1968

Goslett, Clare, The science of home life, National Health Society publication, Allman & Son, (London), nd.

Gurney, Ellen, (ed), Letters of Emelia Russell Gurney, James Nisbett & Co., 1902

Hodson A. L., Letters from a settlement, Edward Arnold, 1909.

Hopkins, Ellice, The legal protection of the young, Strangeway & Sons, 1882

Housing Estate Management, being an account of the development of the work initiated by Octavia Hill, pamphlet issued by the Society of Women Housing Managers, 1946.

Law, John, A city girl, Garland Publishing Inc, New York, 1984, 1st published 1887

Lees, Marjory, Who's Who in NCW, Women in Council, Journal of the National Council of Women in Great Britain, No 26, Spring, 1966

London Female Guardian Society, (pamphlet), no date

Mackirdy, M A and Wallis, M N, The white slave market, 1912

Malvery, Olive, Thirteen nights, Hodder & Stoughton, 1908

Manchester Diocesan Conference 1902, Report of the Committee appointed to consider the question of the housing of the poor, John Heywoood,nd.

Mayhew, Henry, London Labour and the London Poor, the Morning Chronicle, 1849-50.

Meacham, Standish, The English working class: a collection of thirty important titles that document and analyse working class life before the First World War, Garland Publishing Inc., New York & London, 1980

Mearns, Andrew, The bitter cry of outcast London, (ed. A Wohl) Leicester University Press, 1970

Midnight Meeting Movement, 39th annual report, 1899

Money, Agnes, The history of the Girls's Friendly Society, 1897

Morris, William, 'The housing of the poor', in *Justice*, 19 July 1884 reprinted in Social Democrat, September 1889, Vol.III, No IX.

Morrison, Arthur, A Child of the Jago, Granada Publishing Ltd., 1971. (First published 1896).

National Vigilance Association, In the grip of the white slave trader, C Artur Pearson Ltd., no date

Pankhurst, Emmeline, My own story, Eveleigh Nash, 1914

Pember Reeves, Maud, Round about a pound a week, Virago, (London), 1988.(1913)

Perrot, F. D., Overcrowding and drink, Church of England Temperance Society Publication Depot, Popular Tracts for the People, No.15, nd, acquired by the Bodliean Library, 1901)

Pethick-Lawrence, Emmeline, Women's fight for the vote, The Woman's Press, 1910

Progress, Journal of the British Insititute for Social Service, 1907-1923

Report of the committee appointed to consider the question of the housing of the poor, Manchester Diocesan Conference on housing, John Heywood, 1902.

Ruskin, John, Sesame and Lilies, George Allen, (Orpington & London), 1899

Shaen, Margaret, (ed), Memorials of two sisters,: Susanna and Catherine Winkworth, Longman, Green & Co., 1908

Society for the rescue of young women and children, 49th annual report, 1899

Stead, William, The maiden tribute to modern Babylon, reprinted from the *Pall Mall Gazette*, 1885

Webb, Sidney, and Beatrice, The prevention of destitution, Longmans, Green & Co., London, 1916

The White Slave Traffic, articles and letters reprinted from the Spectator, (pamphlet) 1912

Unpublished papers:-

Sturge, Elizabeth, Reminiscences of my life and some of the children of William and Charlotte Sturge and of the Sturge family of Bristol, printed for private circulation, 1928

Sturge, Matilda, Emily Sturge: a portrait in outline, printed for private circulation, 1892

Annual reports:-
Oxford Ladies' Association for the Care of Friendless Girls, 1883-1920
Oxford Girls' Friendly Society, 1884-1912
Oxford Young Women's Christian Association, 1885-1907
Oxford Female Penitentiary, 1863-1902
Oxford House of Refuge, 1874-1915
Oxford Cottage Improvement Society, 1867-1909

Archive of the National Council of Women

Annual reports of the British Institute for Social Science, 1906-1915

SECONDARY LITERATURE: SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adam, H Pearl, Women in Council, the Jubilee book of the National Council of Women of Great Britain, Oxford University Press, 1945

Ajibade, Tina, No room at the top, Housing, (Journal of the Chartered Institute of Housing), April 1997

Allen, G. and G Crowe, Home and family: creating the domestic sphere, Macmillan, 1989.

Anon, A study of the world's YWCA, 1924

Ashton F & Whitting G., Feminist theory and practical policies: shifting the agenda in the 1980s, Occasional Paper 29, University of Bristol, School of Advanced Urban Studies, 1987.

Annan, Noel, 'The intellectual history', in Studies in social history, edited by J H Plumb, Green & Co Ltd, 1955

Atkinson Diane, Funny Girls: cartooning for equality, Penguin Books, 1997.

Banks, Olive, Faces of feminism: a study of feminism as a social movement, Martin & Robertson & Co., 1981.

Bauer, C. & Ritt L., Free and ennobled: source readings in the develoopment of Victorian feminism, Pergammon Press, 1979.

Baylis Lillian, and Cicely Hamilton, The Old Vic, Jonathan Cape Ltd, 1926.

Bell, E Moberley, Octavia Hill: a biography, Constable & Co., London, 1942.

Benjamin, D. and D Stea, (eds.), The home: interpretation, meaning and environments, Avebury, 1995.

Bloch, Alexander, 'Estimating housing needs' in The Architectural Press, 1946

Boyd, Nancy, Josephine Butler, Octavia Hill, Florence Nightingale: Three Victorian Women who changed their world, Macmillan Press Ltd., London, 1982.

Bradley, Harriet, Men's work, women's work: a sociological history of the sexual division of labour, Polity Press, 1989.

Branca, Patricia, Silent sisterhood, middle class women in the Victorian home, Croom Helm, (London), 1975

Brandon, David, Women without homes, Christian Action Publications, no date.

Brion, Marion & Tinker, Anthea, Women in housing: access and influence, Housing Centre Trust, London, 1980.

Brion, Marion, Women in the housing service, Routledge, 1995

Burman, S., (ed.), Fit work for women, Croom Helm in association with Oxford University Press, 1979.

Burrows, R, Pleace, N, Quilgars, D, (eds), Homeless and social policy, Routledge, 1997

Burnett, John, (ed.), Useful toil: autobiographies of working people from the 1820s to the 1920s, Allen & Lane, 1974

Carr E.H., What is history?, Penguin Books, 1990.

Chapman J R, and Gates, M, (eds.), The Victimization of Women, Sage Publications, 1978

Chapman, S D (ed.), The history of working class housing: a symposium, David & Charles, 1971

Clarke, J., Social problems and social welfare, Open University Press, 1988

Chinn, Carl, They worked all their lives, women of the urban poor in England 1880-1939, Manchester University Press, 1988.

Chodorow, Nancy, The reproduction of mothering: psychoanalysis and the sociology of gender, University of California, 1978.

Coleman, David and Salt, John, The British population: patterns, trends and processes, Oxford University Press, 1992.

Collette, For Labour and for women: the Women's Labour League, 1906-1918, Manchester University Press, 1989

Courtney, Janet, The women of my time, Lovat Dickinson Ltd., 1934

Cowley, John, Housing for people or for profit?, Stage 1, 1979.

Cunningham, Hugh, The children of the poor: representations of childhood since the seventeenth century, Blackwell, 1991

Dale, J & Foster, P, Feminists and state welfare, Routledge Kegan Paul, 1986

Darley, Gillian, Octavia Hill: a life, Constable & Company, London, 1990.

Daunton, M. J., House and home in the Victorian city: working class housing 1850-1914, Edward Arnold, 1983

Daunton, M. J., A property owning democracy? Faber, 1987.

Davidoff, Leonore, The best circles: society, etiquette, and the season, Croom Helm Ltd., 1973

Davidoff, Leonore, Current concepts in the history of the family, Social History Society Bulletin, Vol.20, No.1, Spring 1995.

Davidoff, Leonore and Hall, Catherine, Family fortunes, men and women of the English middle classes 1780 -1850, Hutchinson, (London), 1987

Davidoff, Leonore, Class and gender in Victorian England, in Judith R Newton et al (eds.), Sex and class in women's history, History Workshop Series, Routledge Kegan Paul, 1983

Davidoff, Leonore, and Catherine Hall, 'Home sweet home', New Statesman, 27 May 1985

Dayus, Kathleen, 'How sweet was home? working-class experiences of the family in the home 1900-1955', Social History Society Bulletin, Volume 23, Spring 1998, Number 1.

Digby Anne, 'Victorian values and women in public and private', in T C Smout, (ed.), Victorian values: a joint symposium of the Royal Society of Edinburgh and the British Academy, 1990, Proceedings of the British Academy 78, Oxford University Press, 1992.

Digby. A. and J Stewart, Gender health and welfare, Routledge, 1996, Special issue on 'Motherhood, race, and the state in the twentieth century', of Gender and history, 1992.

Dyhouse, Carol, Feminism and the family in England, 1880-1939, Basil Blackwell, 1989.

Engel, A J, "Immoral intentions": the University of Oxford and the problem of prostitution 1827-1914, Victorian Studies, Vol 23, 1979-80, pp.79-107

Elliot, Larry, 'In place of ethical socialism', in The Guardian, 13 January 1996.

Faderman, Lillian, Surpassing the love of Men: romantic friendship and love between women from the Renaissance to the present, The Women's Press Ltd., London, 1985.

Forster, Margaret, Significant sisters: the grass-roots of active feminism, 1839-1939, Penguin, 1986

Fraser, Flora, The English Gentlewoman, Barrie and Jenkins, London, 1987

Frayne, Bernadette and Muir Jenny, Nowhere to run, London Housing Unit, 1994.

Fried, A and Elman R, (eds.), Charles Booth's London: a portrait of the poor at the turn of the century drawn from his Life and Labour of the People in London, Hutchinson & Co., 1969

Gardner Juliet, The new woman, Collins & Brown, 1993.

Gauldie, Enid, Cruel Habitations: a history of working class housing 1780-1918, George Allen & Unwin,London, 1974.

Gillman, Seth, 'Him indoors', in The Guardian, 12 August 1998.

Gilroy, Rose and Woods, Roberta, Housing Women, Routledge, 1994.

Griffiths, Writing feminist biography: using life histories, University of Manchester, 1987.

Hakim, Catherine, Mummy, I *want* to be a housewife, Times Higher Education Supplement, 26 April 1996

Hall, Catherine, The Early Formation of Victorian domestic ideology, in Sandra Burman (ed.), Fit Work for Women, 1979

Harris, Jose, Private lives, public spirit: a social history of Britain 1870-1914, Oxford University Press, 1993 .

Harrison, Brian, Separate spheres: the opposition to women's suffrage in Britain, Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., New York, 1978.

Healey, Edna, Lady unknown: the life of Angela Burdett-Coutts, Sidgewick & Jackson, 1978.

Heath-Stubbs, Mary, Friendships Highway: being the history of the GFS, 1875-1925, GFS Central Office, London, 1926.

Heller, S., Experience and expertise meet in a new brand of scholarship, The Chronicle of Higher Education, May 6, 1992

Hendessi, Mandina, 4 in 10, Report on young women who become homeless as a result of sexual abuse, CHAR, 1992

Higgs, Mary Kingsland, Mary Higgs of Oldham, London, Clare, Son & Co. 1954.

Hill, William Thomson, Octavia Hill: pioneer of the National Trust and housing reformer, Hutchinson, London, 1956.

Hopkins, Eric, The Victorians and child labour in The Historian, No 48, Winter, 1995

Holcombe, L., Wives and property: reform of the Married Women's Property Law in nineteenth century England, Oxford University Press, 1983.

Hollis, P., Women in public: the women's movement 1850-1900, George Allen & Unwin, 1979.

Hollis, Patricia, Women in Council: separate spheres, public space, in Jane Rendall, Equal or different, women's politics 1800-1914, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1987

Hollis, Patricia, Ladies elect: women in English local government 1865-1914, Oxford University Press, 1987.

Horne, Pamela, The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant, Allan Sutton Publishing, Gloucester, 1990

Hyndley, Kate, Women and the family, Wayland (Publishers) Ltd., 1989.

Jeffreys, Sheila, The spinster and her enemies: feminism and sexuality 1880-1930, Pandora Press, 1985

John, Angela, Elizabeth Robins: staging a life, Routledge, 1995

Jones, Diane, Prosopography; background and application, Autobiography, Vol 1, No 1, October, 1992

Jones, Elizabeth Vaughan, The Girls' Friendly Society, 1875-1975, nd

Keaney, Brian, Victorians, The Guardian Education Supplement, 14 June 1996

Keating Peter, (ed.), Into unknown England, 1866-1913: selections from the social explorers, Fontana, 1976.

Kenney Annie, Memories of a militant, Edward Arnold and Co., 1924.

Lander, Anne, Prioritising pipe dreams, Housing, Journal of the Chartered Institute of Housing, July/August 1997

Lawton, R, (ed), The census and social structure: an interpretive guide to nineteenth century censuses for England and Wales, Frank Cass & Co Ltd, 1978

Levine, Philippa, Victorian feminism, Hutchinson Education, 1987

Levine, Philippa, Feminist lives in Victorian England: private lives and public commitments, Basil Blackwell, 1990.

Lewis, Jane, (ed.), Before the vote was won, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987.

Lewis, Jane, Women and social action in Victorian England, Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd., 1991.

Lowe, Stuart & Hughes, David, (eds.), A new century of social housing, Leicester University Press, 1991

Madigan, Ruth, Munro, Moira and Smith, Susan, Gender and the meaning of home, International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, Vol.14, Number 4, 1990

Marshall, T. H., Social policy in the 20th century, Hutchins University Library, London, 1972

Martineau, Violet, Recollections of Sophia Lonsdale, John Murray, 1936

Maynard, Mary, and Purvis, June, Researching women's lives from a feminist perspective, Taylor & Francis Ltd., 1995.

Millar, Kate, Room at the top, Roof, Journal of Shelter, May+June 1995

Miller, Miranda, Bed and breakfast women: women and homelessness today, The Women's Press, 1990

Morton, Jane, The 1890 Act and its aftermath, the era of model dwellings, Lowe & Hughes (eds.) 1991

Muir, Jenny and Ross, Mandy, Housing the poorer sex, London Housing Unit, 1993

Munro, Moira & Susan J Smith, Gender and Housing: broadening the debate, in Housing Studies, Vol 4, No 1, January, 1989, pp.3-17

Murie, A., Housing inequality and deprivation, Heinemann Educational Books, 1983.

Murray, Janet, Strong minded women and other lost voices from nineteenth century England, Penguin Books, 1984

Nevinson, Margaret Wynne, Life's fitful fever, A. & C. Black, 1926.

Newton, J., Ryan M. & Walkowitz (eds.), Sex and class in women's history, History Workshop Series, RKP, 1983.

Nord, Deborah, Walking the Victorian streets: women, representation and the city, Cornell University Press, 1995

Nuttgens, P., The home front: housing the people 1840-1990, BBC Books, 1989

Oakley, A. and J Mitchell, (eds.), The Rights and Wrongs of Women, Penguin Books, 1983.

Offen, K., Pierson, R. & Rendall J. (eds.), Writing women's history: international perspectives, Macmillan Academic and Professional Ltd., 1991.

Oldfield, Sybil, Spinsters of this parish: the life and times of F M Mayor and Mary Sheepshanks, Virago, 1984

Open University, Social problems and social welfare, Course D211, Open University Press, 1994.

Orbach, Susie and Luise Eichenbaum, What do women want? Joseph, 1983.

Parker, Julia, Women and Welfare, ten Victorian women in public social service, Macmillan, 1988.

Pateman, Carole, The disorder of women: democracy, feminism and political theory, Polity Press, 1989,

Perkin, Joan, Victorian Women, John Murray Publishers Ltd., (London), 1994

Pethick-Lawrence, My part in a changing world, Victor Gollancz, 1938

Power, Anne, Property before People: the management of 20th century council housing, Allen & Unwin, 1987

Prochaska, F.K., Women and Philanthropy in 19th century England, Oxford University Press, 1980.

Pugh C, Housing in capitalist societies, Gower, 1980

Purvis, June, Hard lessons: the lives and education of working class women in nineteenth century England, Polity Press in association with Basil Blackwell, 1989

Ramazanglou, C., Progress, illusion and struggle: prospects for feminist research in the 1990s, Plenary address to British Sociological Association Conference on women and social research, 1992 in Ribbens J., Gender inequalities, module handbook, 1992.

Raphael, Samuel, Comers and goers in H J Dyos & M Wolff, (eds.), The Victorian City, Images and realities, Routledge Kegan Paul, London, 1973.

Rendall, Jane, The origins of modern feminism: women in Britain, France and the United States 1780-1860, Macmillan 1983

Rendall, Jane, Equal or different, women's politics 1800-1914, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1987

Riley, Denise, 'Am I that name?' Feminism and the category of women in history, Macmillan Press, 1988.

Roberts, Michelle, Living in a man-made world, Routledge, 1991

Rogers, Helen, 'The good are not always powerful. nor the powerful always good': the politics of women's work in the London needle trades, 1841-64, in Women's History Notebook, No.1, June 1994

Rosaldo, M. & Lamphere, L., Women, culture and society, Stamford University Press, 1974.

Rose, Lionel, Rogues and vagabonds: Vagrant underworld in Britain, 1815-1985, Routledge, London, 1988

Rose, M., 'Victorian society: the emergence of urban Britain', in The Cambridge historical encyclopaedia of Great Britain and Ireland, Cambridge University Press, 1985.

Rosen, Andrew, Rise up women, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974

Ross, Ellen, 'Survival networks; women's neighbourhood sharing in London before World War One', in History Workshop, Issue 15, Spring 1983

Ross, Ellen, Love and Toil, motherhood in outcast London , Oxford University Press, 1993

Roberts, Elizabeth, A woman's place: an oral history of working class women 1890-1940, Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1984.

Roberts, Robert, The classic slum: Salford life in the first quarter of the century, Penguin Books Ltd., 1974

Rowbotham, S., Woman's consciousness, man's world, Pelican Books, 1983.

Royle, Edward, (ed), Issues of regional identity, Manchester University Press, 1998

Rubenstein, David, Victorian homes, David & Charles, Newton Abbot, 1974

Russell, Betty, Silent Sisters: a study of homeless women, Hemisphere Publishing Corporation, 1991.

Saunders, Peter, A nation of home-owners, Unwin Hyman, (London),1990

Smith, D., Sociological theory: methods of writing patriarchy' in R A Wallace, (ed.), Feminist sociological theory, Sage Publications, 1989.

Society of Women Housing Managers, Housing estate management, being an account of the development of the work initiated by Octavia Hill, 1946.

Stanley, Liz, Feminism and friendship: two essays on Olive Schreiner, Studies in sexual politics, No.8, University of Manchester, 1985.

Stanley, L.,(ed.), Feminist praxis, research, theory and epistemology in feminist sociology, Routledge, 1990.

Stedman-Jones, Gareth, Outcast London: a study in the relationship between classes in Victorian Society, Penguin, 1984. (First published 1971).

Stimpson, C., et al, Women and the American City, University of Cambridge, 1981.

Strachey, Ray , The Cause: a short history of the women's movement in Britain, Virago, 1978.

Swindells, J., Victorian writing and working women: the other side of silence, Polity Press, 1985.

Szreter, Simon, Mortality and public health 1815-1914, ReFresh, Spring 1992, No 14

Thompson, E. P., The making of the English working class, Pelican Books, 1970

Thompson, Dorothy, 'Spinning a golden yarn', Times Higher Education Supplement, 16 February, 1996.

Thompson, E P, and Yeo, E, The Unknown Mayhew: selections from the Morning Chronicle, 1849-50, Penguin Books, 1984

Tickner, Lisa, The spectacle of women, Chatto & Windus, 1989

Tilly, L and Scott, J, Women, work and the family, Routledge, 1989

Todd, Margaret, The life of Sophia Jex-Blake, Macmillan, 1918.

Tong, Rosemary, Feminist thought: a comprehensive introduction, Unwin, Hyman, 1989

Tweedie, Jill, Eating children, Penguin Books, 1994.

Ungerson, Clare, (ed.), Women and social policy: a reader, Macmillan education, 1985.

Vicinus, Martha, Independent Women: work and community for singe women 1850-1920, Virago Press Ltd., London, 1985.

Vorspan, R, 'Vagrancy and the new Poor Law in Victorian and Edwardian England', in English Historical Review, XCII, 1977

Walkley, Christine, The ghost in the looking glass: the Victorian seamstress, Peter Owen, London, 1981

Walkowitz, Judith, Prostitution and Victorian society: women, class and the state, Cambridge University Press, 1980

Walkowitz, Judith, City of dreadful delight: narratives of sexual danger in later Victorian England, Virago Press Ltd, 1992

Wandor, Micheline, Once a feminist: stories of generation, Virago, 1990

Warner, Marina, 'Home: our famous island race', the Reith Lectures 1994, reprinted in The Independent, 3 March, 1994.

Watson, Sophie, Women and housing or feminist housing analysis, Housing Studies, January, 1986.

Watson, Sophie and Austerberry, Helen, Housing and homelessness: a feminist perspective, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986.

Webb, Beatrice, My apprenticeship, Longman Green, 1926.

Wekerle Gerda R, Women in the urban environment, in Catharine R Stimpson et al (eds.), Women and the American City, University of Chicago, 1981.

Whelan Robert, (ed.), Octavia Hill and the social housing debate: essays and letters by Octavia Hill, Institute of Economic Affairs Health and Welfare Unit, 1998.

Whitaker, Wilfred, Victorian and Edwardian shopworkers: the struggle to obtain better conditions and a half-holiday, David & Charles, 1973

Wilson, Elizabeth, Women and the welfare state, Tavistock Publications, 1977.

Wilson, Elizabeth, The sphinx in the city: urban life, the control of disorder and women, Virago, 1991.

Wiskin Christine, 'After hours: English businesswomen and leisure in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries', Social History Socieity Bulletin, Volume 23, Spring 1998, Number 1.

Wohl, Anthony, The eternal slum: housing and social policy in Victorian London, Edward Arnold, London, 1977.

Wohl A., (ed.), The bitter cry of outcast London by Andrew Mearns, Leicester University Press, 1970.

WORKS OF REFERENCE

Banks, Olive, Dictionary of British feminists, Vol 1, 1800-1930, Wheatsheaf, 1985
Vol 2, 1900-45, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990

Dictionary of National Biography

Dictionary of National Biography, missing persons, edited by C S Nichols, 1993

Europa biographical dictionary of notable women, Europa, 1983

Girton College Register 1869-1946

Humm, M., The dictionary of feminist theory, Prentice Hall & Harvester Wheatsheaf Press, 1995.

Who was who

UNPUBLISHED PAPERS

Kuehne, Karen, The gap between the spires: a study of homelessness among single women in Oxford, 1987-1996, Independent Study carried out for the MSc in Housing Studies, Oxford Brookes University, 1997

Oxford Women and Homelessness Action Group, Survey of homeless women in Oxford, 1987